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University of Alberta

PREPARATION FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT: REFUGEE AND AGENCY GOALS

BY

Laurel Borisenko

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Master of Education degree

IN

International/Intercultural Education

Department of Educational Foundations

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1991

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8 August 1991

Dear Mr Borisenko,

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 1991, which I received on return from an extended visit to the Middle East. I have now left the Public Information Service of UNHCR, but have passed on your articles to my colleagues in that department.

I am sorry to hear your opinion that the April 1991 issue of REFUGEES was being used for propaganda purposes. Of course, the dossier on South-East Asia reflected UNHCR policy in the area, but it was also a reflection of the conclusions that I reached during my visit. There are many unpleasant aspects of the refugee situation in South-East Asia, and your papers on Phanat Nikhom provide an excellent illustration of that. But is it really true to say that many people who should qualify for refugee status and resettlement are being screened out? And does resettlement represent any kind of long-term solution to the problem? I'm afraid that the mistakes of the past (unrestricted resettlement) and those of the present (the trade and aid embargo on Vietnam) have combined to produce an almost insoluble situation. The CPA is far from perfect, but surely it is better than the alternative: push-offs, the end of first asylum and the introduction of forced repatriation?

Anyway, I appreciated your letter and wish you well with your research. Please feel free to use the photo you mention.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Crisp

Laurel Borisenko
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5 June 1991

Thank you for your letter of 13 May to Tony Jackson. I am replying on his behalf as he has, we hope temporarily, left Oxfam UK to go and work on a relief distribution programme in Nicaragua for USAID.

Regarding your request for permission to include a map of border camps in the appendix for your thesis, I am sure Tony would have no objections.

Tony has had regular contact with the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation and is a personal friend of both Bob Maat and Liz Bernstein. We are still in receipt of their regular information bulletins on Cambodia which as you say are very useful.

The most recent statistics on border camps which I have enclosed are from a CCSDPT report of January 1991, unfortunately the quality is not very good. I have also included a map of UNBRO camps from 1988 which is clearer but not as up-to-date.

I hope this information is of use.

Yours sincerely

Sara Grundy

Sara Grundy
Public Affairs Unit

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled PREPARATION FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT: REFUGEE AND AGENCY GOALS here submitted by LAUREL BORISENKO in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in INTERNATIONAL/ INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION.

Dr. M.K. Bacchus

Dr. C.R. Wilson

Dr. N. Kach

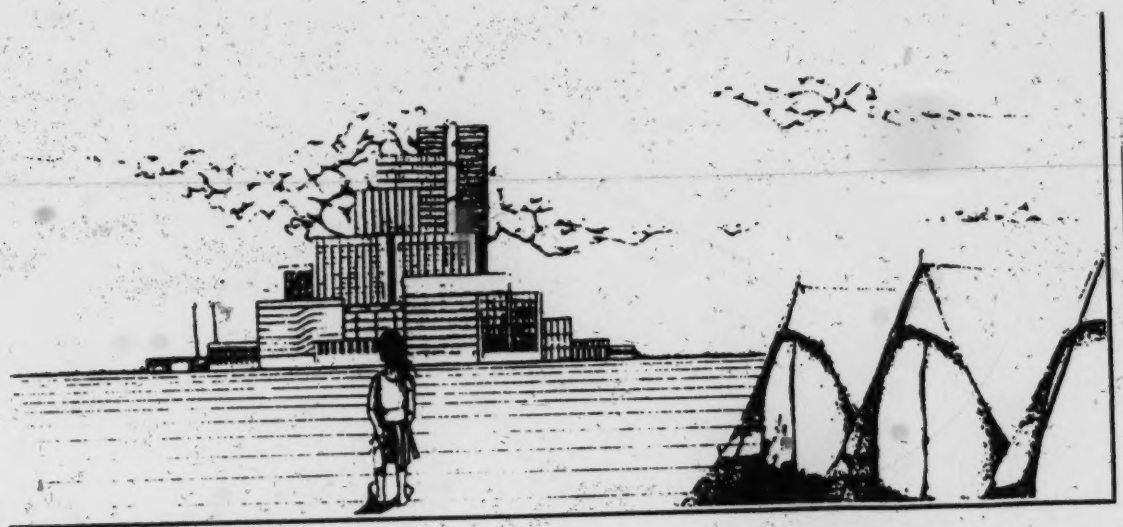
Date: October 2, 1991

Dedication

To the Refugees:

Nolite te bastardes Carborundorum
(inspiration, Margaret Atwood)

Deo Soli Gloria
(inspiration, J.S.Bach)



Kimo Martin Pavitt

ABSTRACT

The time that refugees spend waiting in first asylum camps is a crucial time which should be used in the preparation for the transition to the resettlement country. However, one problem that has been identified by the literature is the lack of refugee contribution to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of pre-departure programs. This research hypothesizes that because of this lack of input there will be a gap between the goals that agencies have for pre-departure programs and the goals that refugees have for their own resettlement.

This study seeks to analyze the goals for resettlement from the perspective of the agencies which implement the programs and refugees who are the clients. Khmer refugees who have been resettled in Canada were used as a case study. Resettlement goals cannot be meaningfully understood outside the context of the events which cause people to flee their countries and the experience of being a refugee. Therefore this research involves both descriptions of what it means to be a refugee and an analysis of the resettlement experience.

The study begins with a discussion of the root causes of refugee movements. A historical/political context to Cambodian refugee movements is necessary to understand how these people came to be refugees, and how past experiences will affect their ability to resettle. From this background theoretical concepts central to the research question are examined, followed by a literature review of studies of overseas orientation programs. Research questions and a hypothesis are formed based on this secondary data. Since resettlement goals are examined in the Canadian context, a description of Canadian government policies on immigration and settlement is necessary.

The first part of the fieldwork, conducted in Thailand, includes a description of life in the Thai refugee camps. Past and present orientation programs are examined, the latter being based on participant observation. The second part of the fieldwork is a summary of interviews with Khmer refugees and settlement workers in Edmonton. The hypothesis is then re-examined in the light of the data from the fieldwork and recommendations are made based on the findings of this research.

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EXPLANATION OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Khmer: Refers to both the people (used synonymously with 'Cambodian') and the language.

Khmer Rouge: The Communist guerilla group that took over Cambodia in April 1975, and were ousted by the Vietnamese in December 1978.

The Coalition: The Khmer Rouge and the non-communist forces joined to fight against the Phnom Penh government which was installed by the Vietnamese.

Pol Pot: The leader of the Khmer Rouge, presently living in Chonburi province, Thailand.

Sihanouk: Leader of Cambodia from 1954-1970, now residing in Beijing and Bangkok; the figure-head for one faction of the Coalition.

Heng Samrin: The Cambodian Prime Minister who was installed by the Vietnamese in 1975.

Hun Sen: The Current Prime Minister of Cambodia. Both men were Khmer Rouge soldiers who defected to the Vietnamese while the Khmer Rouge were in power.

MOI: Ministry of the Interior of Thailand; run by the military.

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

UNBRO: United Nations Border Relief Operation.

Resettlement: When an asylum seeker is allowed to settle in a third country.

Repatriation: When an asylum seeker is sent back to the country of origin. Voluntary repatriation is a policy now being supported by the UNHCR in regard to Indochina. If refugees are repatriated involuntarily, this is called *refoulement* and contravenes Article 33 of the UN Convention on Refugees.

UN Convention: United Nation Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva in 1951, with a Protocol signed in 1967, provides a definition of a refugee and ways in which refugees are to be protected.

CPA: Comprehensive Plan of Action for Vietnamese Asylum seekers; This is an agreement signed by the countries of first asylum, Vietnam, the other countries involved in the region, and the UNHCR. After the cut off date of June 14 1989 all Vietnamese asylum seekers are to be individually screened to determine refugee status.

ODP: Orderly Departure Program; part of the CPA is a plan to allow Vietnamese people to leave the country through legal means rather than by boat.

IOM: International Organization for Migration; previously ICM- Intergovernmental Committee for Migration, and ICEM– Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration.

ESL/CO: English as a Second Language/Cultural Orientation.

Settlement Worker: An individual working for a settlement agency in Canada (my definition).

Agency Worker: An individual working for a non-government organization overseas (my definition).

NGO: Non-government Organization; Americans use the term 'Volag'- Voluntary Agency.

CEIC: Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

CEC: Canada Employment Centre.

CIC: Canada Immigration Centre.

Introduction

The seed for this thesis was planted in me in 1975, after reading an article in the Reader's Digest which described the evacuation of an entire city (Phnom Penh) and the brutalization of its people by their own army. I was in high school at the time, and the article seemed unbelievable because I was sure that if such a thing had really happened the world would have been outraged. Then in 1979, months after the first refugees staggering into Thailand brought reports of the extent of the holocaust, these stories finally hit the front pages, and for a time we were all outraged. Several years later while teaching English as a second language(ESL) I heard the stories told again, this time by my Khmer[1] students. The stories were no longer anonymous, but had names and faces attached to them. In 1985 I had the chance to visit Khao I Dang Holding Camp and I was then able to put the events into a physical context.

Now, in the last stages of my research, after speaking with refugees in Canada and in the camps, and having some idea of the political complexities of the situation, I have found in the words of Dr. Rieux from Albert Camus' book, The Plague, my desire for this thesis:

> Dr. Rieux resolved to compile this chronicle, so that he should not be one of those who hold their peace but should bear witness in favour of [the refugees]; so that some memorial of the injustice and outrage done to them might endure...
>
> He knew that the tale he had to tell could not be one of a final victory. It could be only the record of what had had to be done, and what assuredly would have to be done again in the never ending fight against terror and its relentless onslaughts...by all who, while unable to be saints but refusing to bow down to pestilences, strive their utmost to be healers.[2]

In the case of the Khmer refugees it is not yet possible to look back and weigh the damages, because the story continues to unfold. At the time of writing, the Khmer Rouge have the military ability to take over Cambodia. Despite this, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is still negotiating to repatriate the Khmer on the Thai border since the Thai government will no longer allow resettlement to a third country. Resettlement for the Indochinese is fast

---

[1] The words 'Khmer' and 'Cambodian' are used interchangeably to refer to Cambodian people (and sometimes the language).

[2] Camus, 1948, p 251.

becoming an issue of the past.[3] Now is the time for non-government organizations (NGOs) and for the Canadian government to look back over the past 13 years and learn from the experience since, as Dr. Rieux says, this is a tale of what assuredly will have to be done again.

The research for this thesis examines the overseas preparation given to refugees to facilitate resettlement in a particular third country— Canada. The study seeks to present the refugees' perspective on this process, and to determine how their perspectives and goals differ from those who plan programs for them and offer the services to execute these programs. Because of my personal interest and experience, and because research about Indochinese refugees has generally focussed on the Vietnamese, I have chosen to study the Cambodian community. I have also decided to focus on overseas programs rather than programs in Canada since few studies have been undertaken to determine the viability of educational programs in places where refugees have temporary settlement.

The study begins with a discussion of the root causes of refugee movements. A historical/political context to Cambodian refugee movements is necessary to understand how these people came to be refugees, and how past experiences will affect their ability to resettle. From this background theoretical concepts central to the research question are examined, followed by a literature review of studies of overseas orientation programs. Research questions and a hypothesis are formed based on this secondary data. Since resettlement goals are examined in the Canadian context, a description of Canadian government policies on immigration and settlement is necessary.

The first part of the fieldwork, conducted in Thailand, includes a description of life in the Thai refugee camps. Past and present orientation programs are examined, the latter being based on participant observation. The second part of the fieldwork is a summary of interviews with Khmer refugees and settlement workers in Edmonton. The hypothesis is then re-examined in the light of the data from the fieldwork and recommendations are made based on the findings of this research.

---

[3] This is certainly a debatable statement; never the less, an unprecedented amount of time and energy is being put into repatriation as the only available durable solution. See Refugees magazine, UNHCR, #84, April 1991

I. HISTORICAL/POLITICAL CONTEXT

A. ROOT CAUSES OF REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

Although forced migration has been a feature of human history, during the past twenty years the number of refugees worldwide has reached unparalleled levels. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are at present 15 million people worldwide who have fled their homelands for fear of war or persecution.[4] The current global situation would suggest that these movements will continue to be the rule rather than the exception.

The whole experience which gives meaning to the word 'refugee' is one filled with trauma, suffering, and difficult decisions. Refugees do not willingly leave their homelands, but are forced to flee because of unbearable situations with which they are confronted. This 'push factor' is so strong that people risk safety, security, family unity, and even their lives in order to find a place where they can live without fear. They are people who have been alienated from their countries, and the only act of resistance left to them is to flee.

The UN Convention definition is meant to distinguish refugees— from the wider category of migrants— as individuals in need of special protection . The distinction between refugees and immigrants is generally based on two factors underlying their movement: is it forced or voluntary and is it based on political rather than economic motivation. These two factors are usually considered together: voluntary/economic= migrant; involuntary/political= refugee.[5] The U.N.Convention definition states that a refugee is a person who:

> owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion...is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.[6]

This definition emerged out of a very specific context (post-war Europe) and was intentionally limited: it was meant to apply to individuals fleeing conflicts for essentially political reasons.[7] From the outset situations occurred which, through

---

[4] Gordenker, 1987, p 11; Refugees magazine, January 1990. I notice that the UNHCR has been using the figure of 15 million refugees for the past 5 years despite major movements of peoples.

[5] Zolberg et al, 1989, p 30-31.

[6] United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, (UNTS # 2545) as amended by the 1967 protocol which lifts geographic (Europe) and temporal (pre-1951) limitations.

[7] "Refugees"Magazine, p 6, # 81, Dec 1990; political in the wider sense of the word meaning the use and abuse of power, which may have consequences on economics, religion, group affiliation, and other areas of life.

falling outside this definition, required the High Commissioner to 'used his good offices' in order to provide assistance to asylum seekers.[8] People sometimes flee their countries in large numbers rather than individually, and they leave for reasons which may not fit neatly into the Convention definition. The cause of violence may be external to the country from which individuals are fleeing— people may flee from war, famine, or natural disaster rather than personal persecution.[9]

The gap between the usefulness of the Convention definition and its applicability to current realities continues to widen, and as Hailbronner observes, the vast majority of refugees today do not fit within the bounds of the Convention definition.[10] This is reflected in the wide array of new terms that are needed to describe people in refugee situations:

Convention Refugee: A refugee who fits within the definition of the UN Convention and Protocol.
Mandate Refugee: A refugee who fits within the Mandate of the UNHCR, but not within the Convention definition. This would apply to refugees in countries which still use the geographic restrictions clause in the Convention (eg:Italy).
Prima Facie Refugee: When refugee movements occur in such large numbers that individual status determination is impossible, all members of that group will be given prima facie refugee status, until such time as individual determination is possible.[11]
De Facto Refugee: Persons who are not recognized as refugees according to the Convention and Protocol, and so are deprived of legal protection and status, but who for valid reasons cannot or will not return to their country of origin are labeled as de facto (or B status) refugees.[12]
Refugees in Orbit: Countries can avoid determining refugee status altogether by insisting that the claimant must have the question settled by the authorities of the first country he landed in after fleeing. The result is that these refugee claimants are sent into 'orbit', shuffling from country to country until either some country relents

---

[8] The 'Good Offices' formula was used so often to help those outside the Convention definition that it was incorporated in a resolution adopted by the General Assembly. (Hawkins in Adelman, 1980, p54); G.A. Resolution 3143, 1973: "[requesting the High Commissioner] to continue his assistance and protection activities in favour of refugees within his mandate as well as for those to whom he extends his good offices..." , which Goodwin-Gill notes became an umbrella concept used to aid refugees not included within the Convention definition. (Goodwin-Gill in Martin, p117). The first incident that illuminated the insufficiency of the definition was the out-pouring of Chinese into Hong Kong after the Chinese revolution.

[9] Two attempts to expand the UN Convention definition have been made- one by the Organization for African Unity in 1969, and the second by Central American countries in the Cartagena Declaration in 1984. Both of these declarations identify external aggression, generalized violence and foreign domination as causes for fleeing.

[10] Hailbronner in Martin, 1986, p123. Hence these migrants may or may not be recognized as refugees. "...in addition to the 'official' 15 million refugee total, there are countless other millions who do not qualify for international protection even though their need is great" "Refugees" magazine, #81, Dec. 1990, p 12.

[11] Prasertsri, p 6.

[12] Paludan, 1981, p 71.

and lets them stay, or they are deported back to their country of origin to an uncertain fate.[13]

Illegal Alien: Rather than according any kind of refugee status, which would allow for the involvement of the UNHCR, some countries (notably Thailand with the Cambodians, Hong Kong with the Vietnamese) identify groups and individuals fleeing their countries as illegal aliens.

Asylum Seeker: A person who, when entering a country legally or illegally, asks for asylum from the government of that country. In Canada this person would be called a refugee claimant.

There are several difficulties inherent in trying to decide who is a refugee and who is not. It is often difficult to separate the political and the economic factors which cause people to leave their country. Even when the cause is essentially economic (eg: famine), people are still fleeing life-threatening situations, and have been considered refugees by the world community. Determining refugee status is a formidable responsibility. Someone must make a decision as to the person's motivation for fleeing; the burden of proof that there is a well-founded fear is on the asylum seeker. The concept of asylum can also be problematic. There is a gap between a person's right to seek asylum and the state's right to determine who remains within its borders. The reality is that people continue to leave their countries in large numbers because of circumstances that are beyond their control.

The UNHCR is the international organization with the responsibility of providing guidelines for decision-making in refugee situations. It has two broad roles: the international protection of refugees and the promotion of durable solutions. The UNHCR has identified three durable solutions to refugee situations. In order of preference these are:

1. Voluntary repatriation to the country of origin once the political situation has stabilized.
2. Settlement in a first country of asylum in the same geographic area.
3. Resettlement in a third country.

Albeit in the 1980's some effort was directed toward identifying root causes and durable solutions for these flows, most of the energy and the money have been spent on responding to crises.[14] This emphasis is reflected in the literature on refugees which has focussed on provision for emergencies and resettlement, and in which there have been few attempts to provide a theoretical explanation for refugee flows.

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[13] Vierdag in Martin, 1986, p 73-74; Paludan, p 70.

[14] Zolberg et al, 1989, p 258.

An early attempt to offer a framework to describe refugee flows was made by Egon Kunz in 1973. Kunz provides a significant contribution to the discussion of refugee flows with the creation of a theoretical 'kinetic' model[15] which describes flight patterns and people's motivations for leaving their countries. He suggests that refugees fleeing during different points of time in a crisis would share some similar characteristics— that the earlier waves of refugees are usually educated and well-off, whereas the later waves bring the general population who leave en mass. These different waves of people may have different motivations for fleeing and different responses to being resettled.[16]

A more contemporary and comprehensive analysis has been furnished by Zolberg, Sukhre, and Aguayo, who focus on the root causes of refugee flows. They issue a challenge to the hitherto accepted 'internalist view' of refugee formation which is based on the assumption that causes of refugee flows are only internal to the state of origin, as is reflected by the U.N. Convention definition.[17]

The need for models to illuminate the causes of refugee flows was motivated by the financial crisis faced by the UNHCR despite drastic increases in its budget. Between 1970 and 1980 the UNHCR budget increased more than 60 fold from $7.9 million in 1970 to $500 million in 1980. .[18] Yet as has become most painfully evident in Africa, the budget of the UNHCR has not increased proportionately with the onset of large scale crises; as Dennis Gallagher puts it, "budgets for assistance programs are not infinitely expandable".[19] To the donor countries[20] the money spent on emergency care and maintenance programs appeared to be an endless drain on resources. Hence, in 1980 a UN committee was struck to look into root causes of refugee movements in order to try to introduce a preventive strategy. 'Root causes' refers to "underlying social and international forces that generate refugees."[21]

---

[15] Kunz believes that the word 'kinetic' more accurately describes the dynamics in refugee situations: kinetic implies that two forces are at work- the motion of bodies and the forces acting on them. (1973, p 131)

[16] Kunz, E.F. "The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models of Displacement." International Migration Review, Vol 7, 1973, pp 125-146.

[17] Zolberg, S.A. et al. Escape From Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

[18] UN Relief and Works Agency which aides Palestinians had a budget of $216.7 million for 1984, UN Border Relief Organization, which aides Cambodians had a budget of $28 million in 1983, and the World Food Program had a budget of $132.4 million in 1982. Stein, 1986, p 266.

[19] Gallagher, 1986, p 141; Personal interview with Gonzalo Retamal, Senior Education Officer, UNHCR. Dr. Retamal described the imbalances of where UN aid money to refugees is allocated, based on political considerations of the donor countries, and said that Africa has been the big loser. This point is also supported by "Refugees" magazine, p 10-11,13, # 81, Dec. 1990.

[20] The main source of voluntary contributions to the UNHCR are from Western Europe, North America, Oceana, and Japan. Stein, 1986, p 266.

[21] Zolberg et al, 1989, p 258.

This committee identified economic underdevelopment, and war and political strife as fundamental causes of contemporary refugee flows.[22] Zolberg adds a third 'root cause': he believes that the improvement in communication and transportation encourages refugees to leave their countries, that the 'pull factor' of the opportunity of resettlement in a third country may influence the magnitude and direction of refugee flows.[23]

A 1984 World Refugee Survey conducted by the U.S. Committee for Refugees revealed that more than 95% of the world's refugees fled from (and into) developing countries.[24] Since the majority of refugee flows originate in developing countries, it is argued that the economic imbalances and poverty in these countries lead to political instability which may cause people to flee. It is further argued by Dependency theorists that industrialized countries are largely responsible for the economic and political instability in refugee-producing countries.[25] This theory asserts that the asymmetry of power and wealth that has developed in the post-colonial world is rooted in the capitalist world economy. This system is biased in favour of the industrialized nations that are in control of the world's economy, while the peripheral nations must "participate in a global economy on disadvantaged terms".[26]

While it is widely acknowledged that Dependency theorists tend to paint with a broad brush, there is an undisputedly enormous gap between a few rich, technologically advanced and strategically powerful capitalist countries, and the developing countries. The question is the extent to which these powerful nations interfere in the internal affairs of the countries on the periphery. Zolberg contends that the interference is extensive and that the attempt of world powers to align all nations to their side means that even the poorest and weakest ones may be seen as strategic pawns used by the major players.[27] A major flaw in this theory is the assumption that these powerful nations must be western and capitalist. The strategically powerful nations that have had a history of interfering in Indochina are not restricted to this category. The major players have been the USA, France, the Soviet Union, and China.

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[22] Zolberg, 1989, p 259, 1986, p 153

[23] Zolberg, 1989, p 259, 1986, p 153;

[24] Gallagher, 1986, p 142; Gordenker, 1987, p 53. "Of the 8 major concentrations of refugees today, 5 originated in states that fall within the World Bank's lowest category of low income countries...Most of the world's refugee camps are located in these countries, and a large portion of the refugees that are resettled are in these countries." Zolberg et al, 1989, p 231.

[25] Zolberg et al, 1986, 1989.

[26] Zolberg et al, 1986, p157; also see Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment" Monthly Review, 1966.

[27] Zolberg et al, 1989, p 230; 1986, p 157.

The implication of this international perspective is that if the causes of refugee movements are based in international politics, then the solutions must be as well. Stein suggests that the prevention of refugee-producing conflicts lies in "the realm of maintaining global stability, peacefully resolving disputes, and improving the economic preconditions of violence."[28]

The question, then, is whether the political will exists to achieve this objective. An observation of contemporary international politics would suggest that this is dubious. The conflicts and conditions that produce refugees will continue or end without regard to the effects on the lives of groups or individuals. The Gulf War provides a current example of this. Decision-making in this situation was based largely on the economic and political interests of western nations; the effect that these decisions would have on civilians in the region did not alter their strategic planning.

Although the discussion seems in danger of being lost in universal statements and moral imperatives, it is still necessary to pursue the identification of root causes and durable solutions, and to maintain the responsibility for tackling these problems within the international community. The first step in such a discussion is to encourage the interfering governments to acknowledge their complicity in the instability of a region, and to modify foreign policy related to covert and overt intervention. The discussion will now turn to the specific events which precipitated the flow of refugees into Thailand.

B. Historical Context to the Cambodian Refugee Movement

1. Indochina

> During 20 years as a journalist, most of them spent in transit at wars...I had not seen anything to compare with what I have just seen in Cambodia...For what has happened here has not happened before...I remember Cambodia before the bombing and the horror of the Khmer Rouge...It seemed the most inoffensive and graceful land.[29]

These are the words of John Pilger, a British Journalist who visited Cambodia in 1979, soon after the Khmer Rouge had been ousted by the Vietnamese army. What were the events that turned this graceful and inoffensive land into a graveyard? The following section is a description of refugee movements in Indochina, as well as

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[28] Zolberg et al, 1989, p261; Stein, 1986, p 267.

[29] Pilger, Edmonton Journal, Oct 1979: "Say a Prayer for Cambodia, the Nation is Dying")

the events that led to the mass exodus of Cambodians. An understanding of these events is necessary in order to comprehend the responses of asylum and resettlement countries, and the difficulties that fleeing Cambodians have faced.

The refugee situation in Indochina today is an example of the international meddling and foreign intervention pointed to by Zolberg et al.[30] Prior to World War II this intervention produced four waves of Vietnamese refugees who fled to Thailand as a result of the war for independence from France. After World War II, the Americans intervened in the region by supporting right wing dictatorships in Cambodia and South Vietnam. The Russians supported communist insurgents in Laos and North Vietnam, and the Chinese supported Prince Sihanouk as well as the communist Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.[31]

1975 was a year of great political upheaval in Indochina, as internal struggles fueled by foreign intervention came to a head. The American military finally admitted defeat and pulled out of South Vietnam in April of 1975. At the same time the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge were marching into Phnom Penh to overthrow the right wing government of General Lon Nol. In December 1975 communist insurgents took over the government of Laos.

As a result of this upheaval masses of people fled famine and the threat of being caught in the crossfire between opposing forces. The civilian populations of these countries were used as pawns by their own governments as well as external governments. At the individual level people were fleeing persecution for having fought for, or having connections with the losing side in these civil wars. They also fled forced conscription into the army, and escaped before or after being forced into 're-education camps'.[32]

Since Thailand shares borders with Laos and Cambodia, and is accessible to Vietnam by sea, it has been the most deeply affected by these movements. By the end of 1977, 145,000 refugees had arrived at Thai borders, 34,000 of which were Khmer.[33] Sixteen camps were established at the height of the crisis. From 1975-83 over two million refugees had come to Thailand, of which 1.6 million were resettled. This number does not include those who were refouled,[34] or those who died trying to get to the border.

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[30] Rogge, 1987, p 269.

[31] Prasertsri, 1983, p3

[32] Prasertsri, 1983, p 2.

[33] Prasertsri, 1983, p 10.

[34] Refoulement refers to the act of returning an asylum seeker to a situation of persecution from which he or she has fled. This contravenes Article 33of the UN Convention for Refugees.

Just as Thailand, with the help of the UNHCR, was coming to grips with the influx of Vietnamese and Laotians, Vietnam invaded (liberated?) Cambodia in December of 1978, overthrowing the Khmer Rouge regime and precipitating another wave of refugees, this time Cambodian.

2. Cambodian Refugee Movement

Cambodia's domination by imperialism began in 1864, when the country became a French protectorate, thus joining the Indochinese federation. Increased resistance to French rule grew throughout Indochina after the Second World War, manifesting itself as nationalist communism.[35] Prince Sihanouk lobbied for Cambodian independence as a way to undermine a growing communist guerilla movement. Independence was granted in 1954, and Cambodia was declared a neutral state. The American government refused to sign any of the international agreements guaranteeing Cambodia's neutrality, which the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called 'dangerous and immoral'.[36]

Sihanouk tried to remain neutral, establishing ties with the United States as well as the Soviet Union and China. The refusal of these superpowers to accept a neutrality that did not suit them is a graphic example of the devastating effect of external interference. The right wing guerillas were supported by the United States, the Khmer Rouge were supported by China, and the Vietnamese forces were supported by the Soviet Union.[37]

During the 1960s and 1970s one half to three quarters of peasant farmers were in debt to moneylenders, and this population were either subsistence farmers or owned less than the amount of land necessary to sustain a family. Sihanouk's attempts at land reform were "sabotaged by incompetent and corrupt bureaucrats"[38]. The middle class Khmer were concentrated in urban areas, and occupied positions in government bureaucracy, banking, and education. In 1966 right wing general Lon Nol was elected to the assembly, but by May 1967 the country was so out of control politically and economically that he had to tender his resignation. Sihanouk led the country until the right wing coup of 1970, which restored Lon Nol to power once again.[39]

From 1970 to 1975 the Americans executed a massive bombing campaign on the jungles of northern Cambodia to root out Vietnamese and Cambodian communist forces. During this period the equivalent in tons of bombs of 5

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[35] Reynell, 1989, p 21.

[36] Gateway, Dec. 6, 1979; Shawcross, 1979, pp 43-45.

[37] Shawcross, 1979, pp 52, 387; Erlanger, New York Times.

[38] Reynell, 1989, p 22.

[39] Shawcross, 1979, p67; Gateway, 6th Dec, 1979.

Hiroshimas was dropped on the Cambodian countryside.[40] Because of this bombing and the devastating economic situation, thousands of peasants flowed into Phnom Penh.

The corruption of the Lon Nol government and the military further alienated the peasants. Arbitrary seizure of land from peasants continued and hundreds of peasant leaders were arrested and executed. The mass of dissatisfied peasants who were forced off their land swelled the number of communist guerillas (named the Khmer Rouge by Sihanouk). The problems of the peasants and the urban-rural split gives some insight into the policies that were to be implemented by the Khmer Rouge.[41]

Because of these factors the Khmer Rouge grew in power and number, and developed under the leadership of French trained intellectuals— Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, and Khieu Samphan, who remain the leaders to this day. During the Lon Nol era the ousted Sihanouk was the nominal leader of the Khmer Rouge, which gave the movement far greater legitimacy in the eyes of the peasants.[42]

The struggles between right wing and left wing forces came to a culmination April 17, 1975 when the Khmer Rouge marched into Phnom Penh, as was so dramatically portrayed in the movie "The Killing Fields". This takeover was to initiate a reign of terror such as the world has not seen in recent times. Cambodia was in a state of social and economic devastation. The remedy employed by the Khmer Rouge was drastic economic and ideological reconstruction.

Just as China was entering the last year of its disastrous cultural revolution, the Khmer Rouge were about to initiate a far more extreme version. Their first act was to empty Phnom Penh at gunpoint.[43] Reynell suggests that as well as the ideological motivation of developing a 'classless peasant society', and of breaking up potential opposition, the two million people in Phnom Penh were in danger of starvation since American aid would be cut off.[44]

In Phnom Penh the Khmer Rouge destroyed hospitals, banks, libraries, schools, vehicles, anything that smacked of western culture or technology. People

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[40] This bombing campaign was planned by Nixon and Kissinger, and a select group in the American military, and was executed in strict secrecy. When it was made public it became an embarassing military scandal for the Nixon administration. Shawcross, 1979, pp 19-35.

[41] Reynell, 1989, p25; for example, the emptying of Phnom Penh, forcing all classes to work on collective farms, destroying libraries, etc.

[42] Gateway, Dec. 6, 1979.

[43] This included emptying hospitals and orphanages; Time magazine, Nov 12, 1979, p 33; Shawcross, 1979, p 18, 366.

[44] Reynell, 1989, p 26.

who seemed to be intellectuals were executed.[45] They informed the Khmer people that it was now year zero, and that they should forget the past, forget everything they knew.

"In Cambodia, a former island of peace, no one smiles today. Now the land is soaked with blood and tears...Cambodia is hell on earth." This was a description of Cambodia from Hanoi, before the nature of the Khmer Rouge regime was understood by the rest of the world. Almost any misdemeanor could be punished by torture or execution. The people worked like slaves, and were fed a subsistence level of food. Many of the Khmer Rouge soldiers holding machine guns over the heads of people were hardly out of puberty. These children and adults went through severe indoctrination and hardship to make them capable of the most inhuman acts. The soldiers were from the poorest strata of Cambodian society, and they had been brutalized by five years of bombings and warfare. Tremendous resentment had been built up against the middle class and business people, some of whom had been corrupt officials and landlords.[46] Every opportunity was taken by individuals to carry out personal vengeance. During this reign of terror estimates are that two to three million deaths occurred due to the policies and brutality of the Khmer Rouge.[47]

Relations between Vietnam and Cambodia began to deteriorate in 1975, about the same time that relations between Vietnam and China broke off. China was afraid of a pro-Soviet Vietnam, and Vietnam was afraid of being encircled by China and Cambodia. On December 25th 1978 Vietnam launched a massive blitzkrieg into Cambodia, and by January 1979 the Vietnamese army took control of Phnom Penh, installing the former Khmer Rouge soldier, Heng Samrin, as head of the new government.[48]

Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians poured across the Thai border to escape the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese, and famine. Some were forced across the border by the fleeing Khmer Rouge. As this first wave of refugees crossed into Thailand, the world was finally made aware of the extent of the horror of the Khmer Rouge regime.

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[45] Reynell, 1989, p28; Shawcross, 1979, p 368-69; 'Intellectual' was interpreted broadly, including people who could read, speak another language, wore glasses...Of the 500 physicians in Cambodia in 1975, only 57 survived the Khmer Rouge purges."Death watch: Cambodia", p 34;

[46] Time, Dec. 3, 1979, p39.

[47] "Deathwatch: Cambodia" Time, 12 Nov 1979, p 34. The new national anthem of Democratic Kampuchea was: "Bright red Blood which covers towns and plains/ of Kampuchea, our motherland,/ Sublime Blood of Workers and peasants,/ Sublime Blood of revolutionary men and women fighters!/ The Blood changing into unrelenting hatred/ and resolute struggle,/ On April 17th, under the flag of the Revolution,/ Free from Slavery!"

[48] Gateway, Dec. 6, 1979.

The response of the Thai government to the huge numbers of asylum seekers pouring across its borders has at times been generous, and at other times ruthless.[49] The status of these 'illegal aliens' has always been a precarious one- a fact that Thailand has used to maintain the upper hand in its relations with the United Nations and international agencies. Whatever the judgement on Thailand's policies, the fact is that hundreds of thousands of Khmer, Vietnamese, and Lao have been provided with asylum of sorts for over thirteen years.

3. Present Political Situation in Cambodia

> "When the forest burns, the flames are extinguished quickly because the people worry about the burning forests.
> But when my country burns with the smoke of war, nobody puts out the fire."
> Keng Sothol, Khmer refugee, Thai-Cambodian border.[50]

Because anti-Vietnam sentiments still run high in the American government, the Heng Samrin/Hun Sen government that was installed in Cambodia after the Vietnamese ousted the Khmer Rouge has never been recognized by western governments or China. From 1979-1990, the UN assigned the Cambodia seat in the General Assembly to the Khmer Rouge. The victims were represented by their executioners, and the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge has never been acknowledged by the UN. By a strange twist of politics, while Cambodia has been boycotted by most of the world since 1979, the Khmer Rouge have been fed by the United Nations, protected by Thailand, armed by the Chinese and supported covertly by the Americans.[51]

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council recently formulated a Comprehensive Plan for Cambodia in which Cambodia will be administered by the UN for a period of two years, leading to free democratic elections. In Jakarta in August 1990 all three resistance factions[52] and the Hun Sen government agreed to the terms of the proposal, but later the agreement was scuttled by the Khmer Rouge.[53] In two further meetings in Bangkok, in September 1990 and June 1991, a

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[49] In June 1979 Thailand, overwhelmed by the numbers of Cambodians crossing its borders, reversed its policy of accepting asylum-seekers. The government declared that any future Cambodians crossing its borders would be considered illegal aliens. 40,000 Khmers were forced back into Cambodia at gunpoint, which resulted in the death of a large number of asylum seekers. CCSDPT Handbook, 1986; Prasertsi, 1984, p 13.

[50] Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation Newsletter, Aug 20, 1990.

[51] Paul Lewis, "Europeans Warn Sihanouk on UN Seat" The New York Times International, 15th April, 1990; A letter from the Congressional Research Service dated Oct 1986 revealed that the Khmer Rouge received extensive funding from the American government: more than $84 million between 1980 and 1986.(in Reynell, 1989, p 41, note 5.)

[52] The KPNLF (Khmer People's National Liberation Front), Sihanouk's forces, and the Khmer Rouge make up the Coalition of the guerilla forces fighting the Phnom Penh government, united in their hatred of the Vietnamese.

[53] Berube, Sept. 1990; McCarthy, The Independent, 8 June 1990; Erlanger, New York Times, 5 March 1989.

cease-fire was agreed on (but not kept) but the factions have never agreed on the terms for a comprehensive peace plan.

Amidst this atmosphere of political uncertainty and the continued guerilla war, the UNHCR has begun a heavy push for the repatriation of the Cambodians on the border. Even if the climate were politically stable, field reports from inside Cambodia warn that the infrastructure of the country cannot handle a large influx of people.

The deterioration of conditions in Cambodia has produced 160,000 internal refugees living in squalid camps with little aid available. As well, the economic and military strain of the past 20 years has taken its toll on the Khmer people. A UNHCR field representative reported profound demoralization among the general Cambodian population:

> "Embittered and broken after years of living in fear and uncertainty, Khmer people no longer offer much resistance to the Khmer Rouge who are gaining ground very rapidly...presently controlling many areas surrounding Phnom Penh...the world has been too slow to act, and our policies against the present Hun Sen/Heng Samrin Regime have, perhaps inadvertently, given major support to the Khmer Rouge dominated resistance which threatens to keep Cambodia in the throes of factional power mongering for years to come."[54]

The Cambodian refugees continue to be pawns of international interests and politics, and of their own resistance forces. They are caught in "a hopeless cycle of war and waiting, while the world's powers are frozen in diplomatic deadlock."[55] One researcher asks how another holocaust could have happened in the 20th century; one might ask why the world will allow it to happen again 13 years later as the same forces that were responsible for auto-genocide are poised to take over the country, again.

C. Conclusion

The first section of this paper presents an historical and theoretical context for the causes of refugee flows. The theoretical model places the root causes and the responsibility for refugee movements firmly in the international arena. The historical context for Indochinese refugee movements, and in particular, Cambodian refugees,

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[54] Reynell, 1989, p 22.

[55] Diana Kerry, International Herald Tribune, 19th Dec, 1984.

provides concrete examples of international interference in the politics of this region which has exacerbated the refugee problem, and continues to do so.

Several issues arise from this discussion. The first revolves around the question of refugee status determination. The existence of a formal screening procedure which is supposedly monitored by the UNHCR suggests a legitimacy to this procedure which has not been born out in reality. Refugee status has been given or with-held by first asylum countries based on their political interests rather than on the UN Convention definition.[56]

Thailand has never given prima facie refugee status to the Cambodians on the border, so these people have never had legal protection. Thailand has effectively removed the ability of NGOs and the UNHCR to act as refugee advocates by constantly threatening to close its borders to asylum seekers.[57] The role that the UNHCR, NGOs, and embassies of resettlement countries play in legitimizing human rights abuses needs to be investigated.

The second issue is that strategically powerful nations continue to interfere in the region politically and militarily. The Chinese continue to arm the Khmer Rouge. American Congress recently voted to supply aid inside Cambodia rather than just to the border. But rather than working with the Phnom Penh government USAID has chosen to build hospitals and a road in the 'liberated zone' close to the Thai border, which is controlled by the Coalition seeking to bring down the government of Cambodia. The presence of these hospitals draws Cambodian peasants away from their land to the borders where they come under the control of the Coalition forces, thus further destabilizing the region.[58]

The third issue is that a discussion of repatriation as a durable solution cannot be undertaken in any useful way without also addressing the problems that cause people to flee. While the interference of powerful nations continues to destabilize the region, they also refuse to establish economic relations with these countries, which is an essential precursor to reducing refugee flows. People continue to leave Cambodia and Vietnam because of the hopeless economic situation and political

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[56] Most of the first asylum countries are not signatories to the UN Convention, and therefore have no specific obligations to keep. However since there are no means of enforcing any UN Convention or Treaty other than the Security Council which is seldom used, this is a moot point.

[57] This is not an idle threat since Thailand has forced asylum seekers back across the border, and since Malaysia has been practicing a 'push-off' policy for some time. Malaysia provides boats with water, food, and fuel so that they can make it to Indonesia. Some boats are now landing in Australia!

[58] Jean-Jacques Fresar of the ICRC met with a committee from USAID and U.S. Congress in Bangkok in April 1991. He spoke out strongly against this kind of support of the guerilla forces, stating that it simply increased instability in the region and decreased the chances for a peace plan to work. Another example of American interference is reports of Voice of America radio broadcasting in Vietnam encouraging people to leave the country, which is in direct contradiction to official American policy.(interview with Rick Berube, April, 1991)

instability. The Soviet Union is no longer able to supply aid to Vietnam and Cambodia. This aid represented 80% of the GNP of these countries.

This chapter has outlined the events which have caused people to flee their country. Since the research question will focus on the experience of those who have been resettled, it is necessary to identify and explore the use of some of the underlying theoretical concepts related to this.

II. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

A. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO ACCULTURATION

The concept most central to resettlement is acculturation. The theoretical model of acculturation that is used will determine the goals of programs, and whether these programs have been successful. Therefore concepts of acculturation and successful resettlement will be analyzed.

1. The Refugee Experience

There is no question that the transition from a refugee camp or situation of persecution to life in a foreign country is fraught with stress. The refugee has been through traumatic experiences, her family may have been left behind, she[59] is anxious about what the future holds. Added to this she has migrated thousands of miles to an environment that is strange and may seem hostile. This challenge has been expressed in a poignant way by Jaime Lliambas-Wolff: "[The immigrant] must fashion a new way of viewing the world, a way that entails neither assimilation nor marginalization, and does not mean seeing his life drifting like smoke in the sky."[60]

This experience of flight and resettlement involves drastic and permanent cultural changes for the refugee. As one researcher points out, "The culture that people carry with them in migration is never identical to the culture they left behind."[61] There has been a loss of old patterns of living combined with uncertainty about what kinds of behaviors are acceptable in the new environment. A Vietnamese refugee described this transition to a new life in a resettlement country as one of the most painful and difficult experiences of his life.[62]

2. Definition

The transition process of people from one cultural group moving permanently to a country with a different culture has been called *acculturation* or *cultural adaptation*. Acculturation refers to the cultural change that results from continuous first-hand contact between two distinct cultural groups. Changes may occur in one or both groups, but one group always changes more.[63] Acculturation changes occur on group and individual levels.

Individuals acculturate through negotiating, one by one, what new ideas they will accept, and how far to accept them, according to what it costs or how it will

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[59] 'She' and 'he' will be used interchangeably as inclusive personal pronouns, throughout the paper.

[60] Lliambas-Wolff, no date, p 1

[61] Cronin in Ferguson, 1984, p 14.

[62] Ferguson, 1984, p 134.

[63] Rutledge, 1987, p 273; Berry, 1987a, p 98.

benefit.[64] Problems arise when new beliefs, ideas, and behaviors conflict with already held ideas. Refugees try to find a balance between their cultural heritage and their new lives as Canadians. The decisions they make about what to preserve from their cultures and what to adopt from the host society will affect how they view the success of their resettlement.

3. Acculturation Options

Berry identifies two central issues that members of the arriving culture must decide on in the process of acculturation: 1. To what extent do they desire to maintain their own culture, 2. To what extent do they want to relate to the mainstream society. The answers to these questions produce four acculturation options:

Integration: Maintenance of culture as well as a desire to relate to the dominant society. This produces distinct ethnic groups which cooperate within the larger system.

Assimilation: The original culture of the arriving group is not maintained, and they become a part of the host society. This may be because there is no desire to maintain the original culture, or because the new culture is pressured by the dominant culture to give up its cultural identity, and accept that of the host society.[65]

Separation: No desire (separation) or opportunity (segregation) to join in the larger society; the original culture is maintained.

Marginalization: Alienation from both the larger society and from their own culture.[66]

These acculturation options are illustrated in the following chart:

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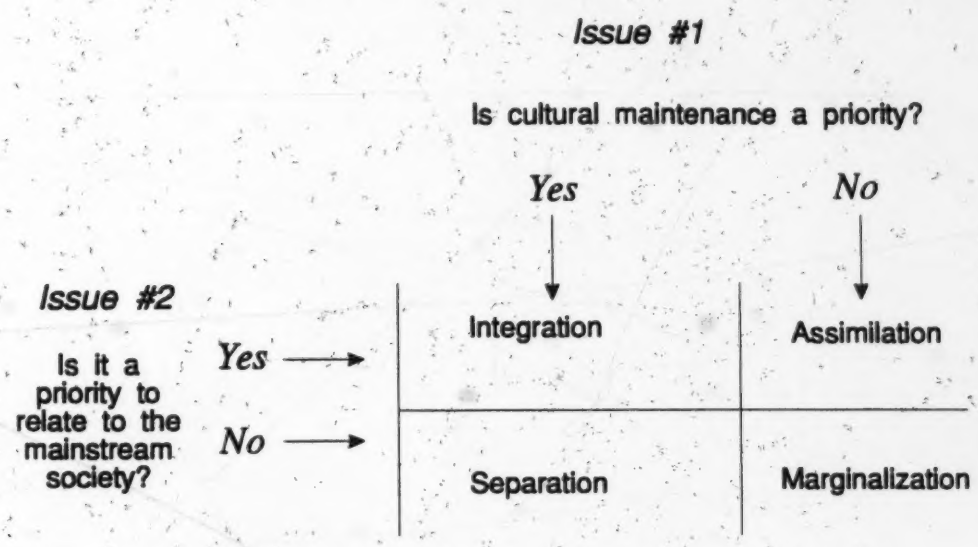
[64] Scott in Rutledge, 1987, p 198.

[65] Rutledge, 1987, p 273.

[66] Berry, 1987a, p 101-103; This often occurs when people who have been living for a long time in other cultures return home.

CHART 1
BERRY'S ACCULTURATION OPTIONS[67]



4. Spheres of Acculturation

Although for the purposes of presenting a model these acculturation options are depicted as one-time either-or choices, in reality acculturation is a multi-dimensional concept. Acculturation takes place in cultural, social, political, and economic spheres. Individuals and groups choose different options for different times and purposes.

Cultures have public and private spheres. Refugees may choose to assimilate or integrate in the public spheres of their lives, but maintain their cultural identity in the private sphere. For example, a person may wear western-style clothing but choose to maintain separate religious practices. This idea is supported by interviews conducted by Barbara Ferguson with Vietnamese refugees, who reported that they have preserved the essence of their culture in the private sphere of their families.[68]

Acculturation is a generational issue. Older refugees may feel separated from the host culture, while working-age refugees would need to integrate to some extent, and children in school would be more likely to assimilate to fit in with their peers. As well, the second generation of a refugee group is much more likely to assimilate to the host culture than the first.[69]

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[67] Berry, J.W. "Understanding the Process of Acculturation for Primary Prevention." Kingston: Queens University, unpublished paper, 1988.

[68] Ferguson, 1984, p 134.

[69] Interview: Clive Nettleton, British Refugee Council, June 1991

5. Stages of Acculturation

The newcomer will go through different stages of the acculturation process depending on the length of time in the new country. The nature of these stages will differ according to the acculturation option being experienced. The following stages are based on a model of integration:[70]

Initial Stage- During the first year the refugee begins to acquire language skills, learn some social norms, and will usually obtain a first job. He will make extensive use of services provided by settlement agencies.
Secondary Stage- This is characterized by increased social competence and self-sufficiency. The newcomer will learn to perform new roles and handle new social situations. She will use mainstream services rather than settlement agencies. Personal adjustment will involve developing a new identity and new values within the new context. Goals will be more future oriented.
Tertiary Stage- This stage involves long term integration. The ideal would be achieving equal opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of society.

6. Factors Affecting Resettlement

Any theoretical model of acculturation must take into account the psychological vulnerability of refugees who, unlike immigrants, are forced to leave their country and often have no choice as to where they are resettled.[71] It is a process which involves the entire transit experience of the refugee, and must be understood within this context.- from the decision to leave, preparation, flight, the time in camp, to arrival and settling into a new country.

Berry's model of acculturation needs to be supported by a phenomenological description of the acculturation process that will help to identify factors that correlate with the cultural adjustment that is involved in resettlement. The following factors are presented by Berry in his research on acculturation as "the most theoretically relevant and empirically consistent predictors of acculturative stress" :[72]

pre-flight factors:
-forced or voluntary migration
-personal attributes of the refugee: age, sex, health, etc.
-the culture of the group coming in
experience of flight:
-trauma involved in flight
-amount of time in first asylum camps
-whereabouts of family members

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[70] These stages are compiled from an unpublished paper by Mietka Zeiba, Alberta Settlement, and Stein, 1981, pp 321-329.
[71] Nicassio, 1985, p 154.
[72] Berry in Miserez, 1987a, p 107.

factors in resettlement country:
-response of the receiving community
-supportive ethnic community already in existence
-mode of acculturation chosen.
These factors are listed in more detail in figure 1.

Figure 1
Factors Affecting Resettlement[73]

PRE-FLIGHT

1. Forced vs voluntary migration

2. Personal attributes of the refugee:
-age
-sex
-marital status
-education
-social class
-urban or rural
-cross-cultural experience
-occupational skills

3. Characteristics of arriving culture
   A. cultural characteristics:
      -degree of economic-socio-political stratification
      -integrative vs. assimilative
      -centrality of ideologies

   B. Ethnic characteristics:
      -pluralistic vs. homogeneous
      -loose or tight social units
      -languages
      -norms and values
      -religious salience

   C. Interpersonal characteristics:
      -conformity vs. autonomy oriented
      -networks (family, friends, occupational)
      -socialization experiences

FLIGHT

1. Trauma involved in experience of flight, psychological state
2. Whereabouts of family
3. Time spent in camps
4. Type of camp- closed vs open
5. Eligible for resettlement, chosen by third country
6. Orientation available (knowledge of host culture and language)

Resettlement Country

1. Presence of ethnic community
2. Refugee's commitment to host culture (sojourner vs. immigrant)
3. Ability to find work
4. Knowledge of resettlement language
5. Social networks:
   -alone (government vs private sponsor)
   -with family
6. Characteristics of host culture:
   -similarity between in-coming culture and host culture
   -attitude towards immigrants
   -official government policy of assimilation or multiculturalism
   -opportunity for economic, social, occupational mobility

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[73] this chart is compiled from the following sources: Nishimoto and Chau, 1988; Dyal and Dyal, 1981; Berry in Miserez, 1987a; Ferguson, 1984.

B. Successful Resettlement

If the over-all goal of orientation programs is to aid in the successful resettlement of refugees into a new culture, then how does one know when this has taken place? How is one able to determine that these programs have been effective in moving towards this objective? A judgement as to the success of resettlement will be dependent on three factors:

1. What model of acculturation (and which acculturation option) is being used?
2. From whose perspective is success being judged- refugees, agencies, government, mainstream society?
3. What stage of the resettlement process is being considered- are the goals short-term or long-term?

Successful resettlement is usually defined by both refugees and agencies in economic terms: if and when the refugee becomes economically self-sufficient, he has successfully resettled. However this is a very broad determining factor which leaves much room for interpretation. What is an acceptable time period in which one should have a first job? If the level of wages keeps the refugee family living below the poverty line, is this 'success'? Should the refugee use welfare at all, even to take the opportunity for language and/or skill training or should he take the first job available? Does being economically self-sufficient mean having just enough money to pay the bills, or having some money left to send to relatives in camps?

A Vietnamese social worker hired to work with Vietnamese refugees in London identified the basic goals of a resettlement program as finding refugees a place to live and a job. Later in the conversation she related that many of the Vietnamese people she visits suffer from deep depression. I then asked her if these people could be considered 'successfully resettled' since they have jobs and accommodation, even though they suffer from severe depression.[74] If prompted in this way agency workers will usually expand their list of resettlement needs to include something about psychological and social needs. In focussing on rapid financial independence, other needs, (psychological, social, cultural) though they may be more pressing for the refugee, tend to be given low priority in terms of program funding and planning. Indra reports that government-sponsored refugees in Canada have in the past been pulled out of language training when a job becomes available.[75]

Definitions for successful resettlement differ according to the time period in which they focus. Settlement agencies tend to focus on the transition period rather than longer term goals. Kathleen Hamilton described 'successful resettlement' as including the following elements:

-attaining a first job

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[74] Interview with Dang Thi Hai, June 18, 1990.

[75] Indra, 1987, p 153.

-learning enough language to function in the community
-making plans for the future
-psychological and social well-being
-integrating into the larger community while maintaining their own language and culture.[76]

Tollefson's definition of success aims at longer term integration rather than goals for the first year. He proposes that success is more than getting an entry level job. The definition should include maintenance of the first language and culture, preservation of traditional family structures, and employment appropriate to previous levels of skills and training.[77] The new goals for resettlement proposed by CEIC also aim at longer term integration, and are based on the multicultural policy. They state that integration involves being on an equal footing with Canadians in terms of opportunities to participate, while still maintaining cultural identity.

In defining the parameters for 'successful resettlement' agencies need to communicate with government and refugee groups as to the model of acculturation and the time period of the settlement being addressed. Since resettlement may take many years, the period that overseas orientation programs can realistically hope to address is just the initial adjustment period which would include the first few months.

Finally, though these parameters may be helpful guides, it must be recognized that, as the reflection of one Vietnamese refugee illustrates, 'success' will always be a subjective concept:

> You can succeed or fail on a test, but success in life? Who can tell? It depends on who is judging, it depends on what you had or what you expect to have, it depends if you compare yourself with those above or those below you. You can be rich and not happy, so it depends on your philosophy of life.[78]

C. Conclusion

Berry's model presents acculturation as a multidimensional concept which includes different options as well as stages and spheres of acculturation. One flaw that exists in this model is the apparent assumption that a choice of acculturation options always exists for the in-coming culture. The availability of these options depends not only on the choices made by the in-coming group, but also on the

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[76] Hamilton, July 1990, interview; This list is similar to Dennis Gallagher's definition: To be able to support oneself financially, speak the language, understand the cultural values of the host country, and develop cultural organizations to enable the refugee community to participate in the host society.(1988, p 230)

[77] Tollefson, 1989, p 127.

[78] Ferguson, 1984, p 35.

openness of the host society and government. The arriving culture and the host country may have very different goals and expectations for this process.

Cultural maintenance is usually a priority for refugees who have often fled repressive regimes which threatened cultural survival. Host cultures, however, may place considerable value on assimilation into the mainstream. The acculturation option chosen will obviously affect the judgement as to a program's success. Tollefson suggests that goals are kept specifically vague so that the programs cannot be judged as to their success.

A common criticism voiced by researchers from a variety of countries, in regard to programs for refugees, is that these programs (government and non-government programs) are seldom based on a model of acculturation supported by research. The results of one interesting study propose that official government policy and social attitudes towards assimilation and acculturation affect the level of stress experienced by refugees. This study[79] revealed that immigrants to Canada were less at risk from mental health problems than those going to the USA or Australia. The suggestion is that one reason for the difference may be related to the Canadian government's model of acculturation- that the emphasis is on multiculturalism rather than assimilation.

In contrast to Canada's multicultural policy, the resettlement policies of the British government have been assimilationist. A policy of dispersal was adopted to try to avoid the formation of 'foreign ghettos'. They attempted to settle refugees in groups of four to ten families in cities and towns throughout England. However the refugees had a different agenda and secondary migration to major centres has been common.[80]

Even if a government has an official policy of integration it may be difficult to influence negative attitudes within the society, and the policy itself may be difficult to implement. Even though Canada's multicultural policy aims at providing opportunities for equal participation for immigrants, the reality of the job market make this a challenging goal.

The types of jobs that are available to refugees are typically non-union, minimum wage jobs in small factories and restaurants. This type of employment will not help the newcomers to avoid long term poverty. The likelihood is that the refugees will be the last hired, the first laid off, and prone to exploitation. Chan

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[79] Murphy (1973) in Dyal, 1981, p 307.

[80] Agathangelou, interview, June 1990.

reports that during the 1982 recession the gap increased between refugee unemployment and Canadian unemployment.[81]

Therefore, there is a need for a description of how individual refugees view successful resettlement and what goals they have for their own resettlement. In conjunction with this is the need to evaluate the extent to which the acculturation model espoused by agencies and government is actually effective in the resettlement experienced by refugees. The following section will identify some studies that have been undertaken to look at these questions.

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[81] Chan in Indra, 1987, p 116.

III. Research Problem And Methods

A. Presentation of the Research Problem

Most of the factors that affect the ease of the refugees' resettlement in third countries are not ones that can be modified or manipulated. For example, it is not possible to alter the refugee's age, or produce a supportive community or family. However one factor that *can* be altered is the kind of preparation that refugees are given in the form of skills and information they will need before entering the new culture.

Within the Indochinese refugee movements, most resettlement countries have provided some kind of orientation programs since the early 1980's in the S.E. Asian camps[82] (located in Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Hong Kong). The programs usually consist of language training and cultural orientation.[83] Although it is not possible to isolate the effects of one factor and draw a causal relationship to resettlement, some studies suggest that orientation programs facilitate an easier transition and that the time spent waiting in refugee camps is critical time to be used for such preparation.[84]

From 1980-83 Dr. Supote Prasertsri was involved with a comprehensive study of education in Thai refugee camps. Because of the large numbers of refugees being resettled (14,000 a month in 1979-80), education in these camps focussed primarily on preparation for resettlement. Three observations arose from this study. First, the experience from earlier waves of resettled refugees pointed to the need for foreign language and cultural orientation *prior* to departure to these countries.[85]

Second, educational programs are more successful when refugees are involved in the planning and the teaching and when the content is taught in the native language as well as the host country language, even for refugees being resettled. This enhances their sense of identity, which is a necessary basis for successful acculturation.[86]

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[82] Programs have been provided by: USA, Australia, New Zealand, France, and Canada (though not through federal funding). Britain is a notable exception to countries providing programs in the camps.

[83] Although languages of resettlement will vary, and Canada has two official languages, English will be referred to as the language of resettlement since it is the language learned by those interviewed for this study.

[84] Prasertsi, 1984; RMC Research, 1985; Willaimson, 1982; Forbes and Spector, 1982.

[85] Prasertsri,1983, p 36.

[86] Prasertsri, 1984, p 12;

The third observation is that programs need to be taught in a way that will respect the refugee's culture. Extreme care is needed to protect the culture of people whose lives are in such a fragile situation. The lack of the use of refugee teachers or language tended to alienate the students from their culture.[87] One Cambodian commented that this is precisely what they had fled from- the destruction of the Khmer culture. He saw education as being a vital lifeline for preserving a culture and people that had come close to annihilation.

A study was undertaken in 1984 by RMC Research for the American government to determine whether the overseas orientation did in fact assist the refugees in the resettlement process.[88] The American government funds a six month pre-departure program in refugee camps in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. This program includes language, cultural, and work orientation. Settlement workers were interviewed, as well as refugees who had been in the United States for six months.

All the refugees, both those who had been through the orientation program and those who had not, strongly endorsed the program and felt that the first few months in the new country are much more difficult without this preparation. They would also suggest to friends and relatives in the camps that if they were given the choice of attending this training or coming straight to the United States, they should take advantage of the program.[89]

The orientation program was also endorsed by American settlement workers. These workers felt that the refugees who had attended orientation were able to be more independent, though they believed that the orientation needed to provide a more realistic picture of life in the United States. Both refugees and settlement workers questioned the ability of Filipinos to be adequate English teachers since the content of the ESL program used orientation topic for life in the United States.[90]

Interestingly, interviews conducted by Linda Hitchcox with Vietnamese refugees in the camps produced quite different results. The consensus from these interviews suggests that the refugees regarded the mandatory six month program as a

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87 Prasertari, 1983, p 40.

88 RMC Research Corporation, "The Effects of Pre-entry Training on the Resettlement of Indochinese Refugees" Final Report, October 1984.

89 RMC Research, 1984, p 97.

90 RMC Research, 1984, p 95. Filipinos are hired as English teachers in Bataan; native speakers are hired as teacher supervisors.

final necessary hoop to jump through before they were allowed to leave the camp, and that they would have preferred to go straight to the United States.[91]

Some researchers question whether these programs do in fact achieve their stated goals or, more to the point, whether these goals are acceptable and beneficial to refugees. One question that must be asked is whether the programs are geared towards the felt-needs of refugees. Doreen Indra articulates the question in this way: "Who defines, for purposes of programming and policy, what [are] important refugee needs, and which have priority over others?"[92]

In her critique of language and orientation programs for Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong Clayre Hanbury reports that the planning of these programs tends to be done largely without refugee input. Consequently individual refugees are not able to participate in defining their own needs and goals or determining the preparation they would like to receive to meet these needs. The question that arises from this observation is whether refugees in camps who have had little or no contact with western countries are able to determine what preparation for resettlement would be the most effective and necessary.

James Tollefson has written a scathing attack of the American overseas programs. He suggests that the curricula and goals of the orientation program are determined by the agenda of the program administrators and their perception of refugee needs. He claims that the goal of the orientation is to 'Americanize' the refugees- to teach refugees American attitudes, values, and behaviors- to adopt the 'success ideology', to deny their cultural heritage, and to accept a subordinate position in society.[93]

A similar opinion has been expressed by Linda Hitchcox. She believes that cultural orientation programs have been a more overt way that agencies attempt to control the behavior of refugees. The underlying message that is communicated to refugees is that they must learn the western way of thinking and acting, which is right, as opposed to the Vietnamese way, which is wrong. One refugee in Hitchcox' study jokingly commented that he felt the American orientation was like being put through another re-education program. Nevertheless, these refugees were not passive recipients of what may seem like western propaganda. Hitchcox also observes that there is often a gap in what is taught by agencies and what is received by refugees.

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[91] Hitchcox, 1988, p 298.

[92] Indra, 1987, p 150.

[93] Tollefson, James. Alien Winds: The Re-education of America's Indochinese Refugees. New York: Praeger Publishers,1989, p 40-42.

This gap is not caused by a lack of understanding on the part of the refugees, but it is due to a disparity in goals.[94]

The RMC study also reveals a difference in resettlement goals between settlement workers and refugees. Settlement workers identified as the highest resettlement priority, finding refugees employment so that they did not need to use welfare. This emphasis would seem to be influenced by the American government agenda since the objectives for resettlement stated in the Refugee Act of 1980 are to "provide for swift acculturation" and "achieve economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible". The refugees, alternatively, regard education as their highest priority and consider welfare as an entitlement which permits them to achieve educational goals.[95]

The UNHCR conducted a survey of resettlement countries in 1981, primarily to determine which types of training programs would be the most effective in preparing refugees for employment. One hundred forty questionnaires were received from settlement workers, government officials, and refugees from Canada, the United States, and Australia. The interviews of settlement workers in this study indicated that refugees who begin to work immediately tend to learn English faster and, in the long run, are in a better financial position than those who depended on welfare.[96] However, the observations of a Khmer settlement worker in Edmonton were that refugees who enter the workforce without learning English only maintain an economic advantage for approximately the first two years. If they have jobs that do not require English, they do not learn the language, which limits their ability to advance to better jobs and keeps them socially isolated from the mainstream of Canadian society.[97]

Further results of the UNHCR study suggest that refugees should receive specific skill training for those jobs which were most frequently available to them- janitorial, domestic, production sewing, and restaurant work. Other skill training (eg: auto mechanics) may falsely raise the hopes of refugees, since they should expect to start with unskilled jobs.[98] The concern that refugees have unrealistically high expectations of life in the resettlement country was raised by many agency workers. However some researchers (Tollefson, 1989; Preston, 1989) charge that the assumption that refugees will either be unemployed or employed at the lowest level jobs, regardless of their qualifications or experience, serves to track refugees into the bottom rung of the labour market.

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[94] Hitchcox, 1989, p 293.

[95] RMC Research, 1984, p 1.

[96] Williamson, 1982, p viii.

[97] Koh Tran, interview, 1991.

[98] Williamson, 1982, p vii, ix. This particular comment came from a letter from CEIC!

This literature review reveals a dichotomy in the results of studies pertaining to pre-departure programs. On the one side of this dichotomy are studies which endorse the orientation programs in the camps (RMC Research, Williamson, Forbes and Spector, anything written by Passages magazine, which is funded by the American government). The stated goal of these programs is to prepare refugees for the challenges of beginning a new life in the west. The priority of these programs seems to be to provide refugees with a 'realistic picture' of life in North America, which means lowering their expectations of the type of employment they will likely receive.

On the other side of this picture are studies which are critical of the orientation programs (Tollefson, Hitchcox, Hanbury). These studies emphasize the need for refugee participation in the planning and implementation of programs. They would also stress the need for affirming and protecting the refugees' culture. The first group would charge the second with presenting an unrealistic picture of life in North America; the second group would charge the first with being assimilationist.

Questions arise from the discrepancy in research results between the interviews of refugees conducted by Hitchcox and the interviews conducted by RMC Research. As was pointed out, the refugees in Hitchcox' study had negative opinions of the orientation program and the refugees interviewed by RMC Research strongly endorsed the same program. This discrepancy in results may illustrate the different biases of the researchers. It may be caused by the differences in perspective between refugees in the camps and those who have experienced resettlement.

I would posit that the greatest cause of this discrepancy is the authenticity of responses given to independent researchers as opposed to interviewers who were thought to be connected with the American government. Since RMC Research used American interviewers who asked questions about American programs refugees may have felt constrained out of politeness to give only positive comments. As a British researcher speaking with refugees who were in an American program, Linda Hitchcox had a greater possibility of receiving honest answers. Her research was conducted on a more informal basis than the structured RMC interviews. As well, she was introduced into refugee communities by refugee leaders who acted as translators. These have persuaded me to base my hypothesis on the findings of Linda Hitchcox.

B. Research Questions and Hypothesis

The following questions arise out of this literature review:

-What are the stated goals of the pre-departure programs? Who defines and implements these goals? Is there refugee input?
-Do refugees who have never been to the west have the ability to participate in planning these programs?
-What is the perception of refugees about the usefulness of these programs?
-What goals do refugees have for their own resettlement? Do refugees and agencies have the same goals?
-Do these programs track refugees into the lowest end of the labour market? Are they assimilationist?

Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that the goals of the overseas orientation programs are based only on the service delivery agency's understanding and interpretation of refugee needs. Refugees are not involved in planning, implementing, or evaluating programs, hence their perspective does not inform these programs. Consequently, the programs are perceived as more necessary by the agencies than by the refugees. Although the program goals may support an integrative model of acculturation, the implementation of these goals will tend to have an assimilationist focus. Because of the lack of refugees' input there will be a discrepancy between the goals for resettlement that the refugees have, and the goals and agenda of agencies for what these programs will accomplish.

This discrepancy in goals and agenda will be manifest in these areas:
1. The perception of the usefulness of pre-departure programs: agency workers will perceive the programs as more useful than the refugees.
2. Model of acculturation: agency programs will encourage assimilation into the mainstream of Canadian society; refugees will consider cultural maintenance as a priority.
3.Employment: Agencies will stress the advisability of immediate employment and will discourage the use of social assistance; refugees will prefer to continue language and job skill training, and will make use of social assistance to do so, in order to be prepared themselves for better jobs.

CHART 2
HYPOTHESIS: GOALS FOR RESETTLEMENT

	Agency	Refugee
Perception Of Usefulness Of Program	very useful	necessary, marginally useful
Model Of Acculturation	goals will espouse integration, but program will be assimilationist in message.	strong desire for cultural maintenance, tending towards separation
Timeline Re: Employment	push for immediate employment; assumption that refugees will abuse welfare system	desire to use government programs to improve language and job skill training, to get away from minimum wage jobs.

C. Research Methods

1. Constraints of this research

The complications involved with cross-cultural research with refugees seem formidable. Difficulties range from having access to the community to winning its support, to communicating across language and cultural barriers. Perhaps the greatest challenge is obtaining and understanding authentic responses to questions.

All of these factors will affect this research project. It will also be influenced by political decisions made by the Canadian government as well as decisions made within Indochina. For example, during this research, the Canadian government changed its policy on funding for overseas orientation. Thailand will no longer allow Cambodians to be resettled, and the UNHCR is working on a repatriation plan for those still in the border camps.

With respect to a literature review, nothing has been written on Canadian overseas orientation programs, so the literature review relies heavily on data from American programs, which influences the hypothesis. Most of the research on Indochinese refugees has concentrated on the Vietnamese community; little has been written about Cambodians. Also, reliance must be placed on the cooperation of the agencies which provided the information necessary to describe the Canadian orientation programs.

Supporting or disclaiming the hypothesis presents a challenge. Establishing the stated resettlement goals of agencies is reasonably straight-forward. Asking refugees about their own goals for resettlement (an analytical question in a foreign language), then comparing these with the goals of agencies presents more complications since neither are homogeneous groups- refugees will have individual aims, and so will different agencies and workers within agencies.

Despite the many difficulties involved with refugee research, and with this study in particular, there is great potential for developing new insights into Canadian refugee resettlement, especially from the perspective of the refugee. The paucity of literature available for a literature review points to the need for research into Canadian programs that can inform Canadian policy.

2. Methods of Data Collection

The ideal research situation in which to study this question would have been to combine elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This would involve conducting a random sample of the Khmer communities in Edmonton in order to obtain a broad perspective of opinions in regard to the refugees experience of resettling in Canada and how the programs in the camps affected this experience. The next step would be to personally interview each person selected to

acquire in-depth responses to the questions. However, time, financial constraints, and access to the Khmer community made a large random sample impossible. Because of these constraints and the nature of the research question, a qualitative approach was chosen, using three different methods of data collection:

1. ***Documentation Research***: I have had the opportunity to use refugee documentation centres in Oxford (Refugee Studies Programme) and Geneva (UNHCR). This secondary data forms the basis of my literature review and substantiates the sections that provide context.

2. ***Interviews***: Because of the opportunity to travel widely in conducting this research I have had access to a variety of resource people (listed in the bibliography). I have interviewed people from Britain, USA, and New Zealand– researchers, agency officials, UNHCR workers, and embassy officials , as well as Canadians working overseas. This has provided a broader context in understanding the question. The bulk of the fieldwork interviews were with Khmer refugees, settlement workers, and government officials in Edmonton.

The settlement workers interviewed are from settlement agencies in Edmonton (Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Catholic Social Services, St. Barnabas Refugee Society) agencies that run overseas programs (International Organization for Migration, World University Services of Canada, Mennonite Central Committee, Consortium). In addition to this I interviewed Canadian government officials with provincial and federal immigration departments in Alberta, and federal immigration headquarters in Ottawa.

3. ***Participant Observation***: No amount of interviewing or reading of secondary data can replace actually being in the research setting. This is particularly true if the setting is a refugee camp. The field data are strengthened by the opportunity to participate for six weeks in a pre-departure program in Phanat Nikhom refugee camp in Thailand. I taught English to Lao and Vietnamese refugees who would be coming to Canada.

IV. CANADIAN GOVERNMENT RESETTLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The research questions that arise from the literature review revolve around resettlement goals and perceptions of pre-departure programs. Since Canada is the resettlement country under discussion it is necessary to review the immigration and settlement policies that affect the kind of programs that are available to refugees.

A. SETTLEMENT POLICY

Canada is a country largely made up of immigrants. Many of these have been refugees, since they fled situations of persecution. Nevertheless our response to immigrants and refugees has been a mixed one. During the Nazi oppression Canada had one of the worst records of any western nation for providing asylum to Jewish refugees.[99] However, between 1979 and 1982 Canada accepted 81,500 Indochinese refugees, which was the highest number of refugees per capita of any resettlement country.[100] At the height of the Indochinese refugee crisis a sponsorship system was implemented whereby Indochinese refugees had a sponsor- either a relative, a group, or the government. Sponsorship essentially refers to who will bear the initial financial costs and other settlement assistance.

The 1989 Immigration manual states that the policy on settlement aims: "to promote the domestic interests of Canada, recognizing the need to encourage and facilitate the early adaptation of newcomers."[101] For the past ten years this policy has been focussed around the provision of initial essential services for newcomers, which include: airport reception, counselling, interpretation, employment information, employment skills counselling, language and skill upgrading, financial assistance, and orientation programs. These services are provided by non-government settlement agencies, which receive government funding.

Rather than basing programs on an overall policy or model of acculturation based on research, settlement has been viewed as a series of discreet activities by a variety of organizations. However the 1991-1995 Immigration Plan claims to reflect a significant shift in the government's approach to immigration planning. Thirteen years into the Indochinese refugee 'crisis', it has been recognized that short-term planning is no longer appropriate. There has been "a shift from short- to long-term planning, and to a more comprehensive view of the immigration process itself."[102]

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[99] Abella, Irving. None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-48. Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1982.

[100] Indra, 1987, p 148.

[101] Immigration Manual, Chapter 7.01, 1989.

[102] Immigration Canada Annual Report to Parliament, Oct. 1990, p. 1.

This broader view of settlement is reflected in what is referred to as 'the integration strategy'. The aim of this strategy is to promote the full participation of immigrants in all aspects of Canadian life. The report recognizes that integration must be seen as a process that begins when the immigrant is accepted to come to Canada, and continues beyond the first few months after arrival, "up to and beyond the time citizenship is acquired and full participation in Canadian society is achieved."[103]

Particular stress will be placed on a new direction for language training, and on strengthening settlement and integration programs. However, the report recognizes that integration, and therefore settlement,involves more than learning a language and finding a job, it includes: "...finding a place in Canadian society, a sense of belonging, and assuming the rights and responsibilities of being Canadian. It is about being able to take part, free of barriers, in every dimension of Canadian life—economic, social, cultural and political."[104]

Integration should be a two-way street which requires accommodations and adjustments from both the newcomer and the host society: "On one side, Canadian society grows and evolves as it absorbs new people and cultures...On the other side, immigrants acquire the skills they need to become involved and make their contribution to Canada's well-being."[105] Because of Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, the mandate exists to promote programs which can facilitate this mutual process of accommodation. This expanded view of settlement implicitly links the goals of the multicultural policy, which is to encourage all members of Canadian society to "preserve, enhance, and share their cultural heritage."[106], with the goals of settlement.

B. SETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

Until December 1990 the policy of the Canadian government was to provide resettlement programs in Canada rather than in the camps. The explanation given for this policy by Linda Holmes[107] is that the Canadian government chose to move refugees out of camps as soon as possible. This was contrasted with the policies of Australia and the USA, whose governments prefer that refugees have a certain level of English before arriving in those countries. Prior to 1990 most of the refugees

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[103] Ibid, p 13.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid, p 14.
[106] Multicultural policy of Canada, July 1988, article 1(a).
[107] Acting Chief, Delivery Planning, Settlement Branch, Immigration.

going to Canada who wished to study English had to depend on other programs to accommodate them.[108]

The government has recently decided that it may be more cost-effective to start language training in the camps.[109] Therefore in March 1990 the Minister endorsed plans for a Settlement Language Program with an overseas component, with the belief that this would increase the effect of the settlement dollar. Six weeks was the suggested length of the program, which is to be conducted during the processing time so that refugees will not be required to stay in the camps longer than necessary.[110]

International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been awarded the contract to do all the overseas immigrant orientation for Canada. This is a large international organization based in Geneva which, though separate, was founded at the same time as the UNHCR. IOM has been responsible for organizing medical examinations and transportation to resettlement countries for refugees in Thailand and other countries. Money has also been made available to develop a cultural orientation syllabus which language teachers overseas may use. There will be a series of handouts and factsheets for refugees and immigrants, written in English and one of four 'heritage' languages. There will also be an animator's guide for resettlement agencies in Canada called "Welcome to Canada", which will be generic, and can be personalized for each community. These documents were scheduled to be completed by March 1991. As of April of that year, a draft copy of the cultural orientation syllabus was in Phanat Nikhom; this was used sparingly.

C. Overseas Determination Procedure

There are two parts to the decision-making process for resettlement to Canada:

1. ***Eligibility***: Refugee status must be assigned so that the asylum seeker is eligible to be resettled. Refugee status is determined by the country of first asylum with varying degrees of input from the UNHCR, though Canada has its own list of refugee producing countries and is not bound to accept that determination. Canada also has

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[108] From September 1988 to August 1990 MCC offered English classes to Vietnamese adults bound for Canada, but this program was not funded by the Canadian government. Now that the Canadian government is funding ESL, the teachers in the Canada school were told not to allow refugees not going to Canada into the program. It is fortunate for refugees who came to Canada earlier that other groups did not have the same policy.

[109] The cost of ESL instruction in the Philippines in 1982 was .37 per contact hour, as compared with $2,500 for ESL instruction for a family of four in Canada. (Forbes and Spector, 1982; Lamphier, 1982)

[110] Telephone interview with Linda Holmes: Settlement Delivery, Settlement Operations Branch, CEIC Ottawa. Aug 1990. There is a question as to what provided the motivation for the Canadian government to join IOM and to pour major funding into overseas orientation programs, eleven years after Phanat Nikhom opened and one year before it will close its gates. Will CEIC claim in the near future that since major funding is being poured into these overseas programs it can freeze or cut back funding for settlement programs in Canada.

a list of 'designated classes' of people who may not fit into the Convention definition, but who, for compassionate reasons, may be accepted by Canada.
2. ***Admissibility***: This is an assessment of the individual's potential to establish successfully in Canada. Relaxed selection criteria are used, which is the same criteria/point system used for immigrants, but this is not applied as stringently. Hence the visa officer would look at the person's age, educational background, occupation, language abilities, initiative taken in the camp. There is a sliding scale of how stringently the criteria are applied, depending on the support the refugee will receive in Canada. Government sponsored refugees do not have a personal sponsor, so the criteria used are tighter. Group sponsored or assisted relative classes will have people in Canada to help them out, so the criteria are more relaxed.[111]

Of the refugees eligible for resettlement, the UNHCR sorts through and gives files to various countries to consider, based on the criteria of these countries and where the refugee has close relatives. The Canadian visa officer would then look through these files and go to the camps to interview refugees.

The process that a refugee would go through in order to be interviewed for resettlement is as follows:
1. The file must be presented to Canada by the UNHCR, or a sponsorship request made from Canada.
2. After the file is presented to the embassy the refugee waits three to four months for an interview with the embassy. A decision is usually made on the spot. A decision would be pending if the visa officer needs to verify some information. The refugee would then wait for a transfer to Phanat Nikhom. They would be in this camp for 6-9 months while forms are being processed, and they have a final medical examination.

Government sponsored refugees do not know what city in Canada they will be going to until several weeks before they leave. No destination is given until the refugee passes the medical examination, and is ready for a visa. This information comes from Ottawa. The destination is always a Canada Employment Centre (CEC) office in a city.

D. IMMIGRATION CATEGORIES

There are three major immigration categories through which refugees[112] are able to come to Canada: government sponsored(Designated Class 1), group sponsored(DC 3 and 5), and relative sponsored(DC 2).

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[111] This statement was made by the visa officer in the Canadian Embassy in Bangkok, though this is not official immigration policy.

[112] The use of the terms 'immigrant' and 'refugee' can become confusing at this point since the designated class regulations are meant to provide the means for resettlement for asylum seekers who may not have been deemed refugees; also, upon arrival, all

The term "government sponsored" refugee refers to refugees who are selected by Canadian visa officers from refugee camps. These refugees will receive direct financial assistance from the government for one year, or until they become financially independent, whichever comes first. This assistance covers rent, food, clothes, medical expenses, ESL, and other basic expenses.

Group (also referred to as privately) sponsored refugees refer to those refugees who have been sponsored by a church, ethnic or settlement organization, or any group of 5-25 Canadians. These groups agree to be responsible for the refugee's basic needs for the first year. This includes not only financial needs, but also helping the newcomers in their general adaptation.

The third designation is relative sponsored refugees. Their families must sign an agreement to support them for a period of five to ten years, depending on the closeness of the family relationship. Refugees under this form of sponsorship are not eligible for welfare, but they *are* eligible for any other Canadian programs (eg: health care). If the family is not able to support them there is a procedure to claim a 'breakdown of sponsorship'.

E. CONCLUSION

Just as Canada's immigration track record has been a mixed one, so its responses to refugees have had humanitarian as well as pragmatic elements. Canada continues to be one of the top three countries of resettlement for Indochinese refugees. It has also gained a reputation both among refugees and refugee workers as a country that provides a positive atmosphere for resettlement.[113]

Concern for Canada's domestic policy has been a primary criterion in accepting people for immigration. This has meant that employment has always been linked with Canada's immigration policy. The second part of the decision-making process used in selecting refugees from the camps (admissibility) states that they should be able to settle successfully in Canada. Success is usually measured by employability. This is a legitimate concern in relation to the immigrant population, but not in relation to refugees.

The consequence of countries using an immigration type of criteria in selecting refugees for resettlement is that the cream of the refugee population is chosen quickly while those who are perceived to be less desirable, due to reasons such as age or health, are left in the camps. The first asylum countries are frustrated

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migrants who have been accepted by Canada are given 'landed immigrant status. Therefore the use of the term refugee pertains to people who have come from refugee situations whether or not they have been given official refugee status.

113 This is the impression that I have gained in speaking with people from many countries who are involved with immigrants and refugees, as well as from my conversations with refugees in Canada and in the camps.

by being left with large numbers of "longstayers", and have on occasion insisted that these people be resettled before other refugees are eligible for resettlement. An equitable selection system could be established and monitored by the UNHCR so that each country would share the responsibility of accepting those refugees who may not contribute to the domestic interests of the country.

The goals stated in the 1991-95 Immigration Plan sounds considerably more enlightened. Rather than being understood strictly in terms of immediate employment, integration is seen as a process that begins before the person arrives in Canada and continues for several years. The test will be to see whether and how this rhetoric will be implemented in the formation of new policies and programs. For example, how will this integration strategy be interpreted by Employment Counsellors who have the most influential contact with newcomers?

Several questions arise from this new Immigration Plan:

-Does Canada's immigration and settlement policy treat refugees as a class distinct from immigrants?
-Canada espouses a multicultural model of acculturation based on Integration; how does this model affect settlement policy?
-How is 'successful resettlement' defined by policy makers, frontline government workers, settlement workers, refugees?

This completes the background information necessary before introducing the fieldwork. The first section of the fieldwork is a description of life in the refugee camps and the Canadian orientation programs. This section is based partly on secondary data and partly on participant observation.

V. OVERSEAS ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

Virtually all the Cambodian refugees who resettle in Canada have spent several years in one or more of the refugee camps in Thailand. The effects that extended stays in these camps has on resettlement is a question of relevance of this study. Because the overseas programs under study are run in the camps, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the effects of this camp setting, both on the orientation programs and on the refugees' ability to resettle in a third country.

A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE KHMER REFUGEE CAMPS

There are approximately 350,000 Khmer still living in the eight camps that are located just inside the Thai border with Cambodia. The refugees that were interviewed in Edmonton spent three to ten years in one or more of these camps. A description of the camps helps one to understand something of the experiences that have shaped the lives of the Khmer.

Of the border camps, one is monitored by the UNHCR, two are controlled by Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), one is controlled by Sihanouk supporters, and the other four are under Khmer Rouge control.[114] The border camps vary significantly in terms of the resources available to them and the extent to which they are closed. The camps controlled by the Khmer Rouge are the most closed and controlled. The Cambodians who ended up in Khmer Rouge camps were either forced there by soldiers, or took an unlucky turn at the Thai border in 1979.

All the holding camps for Cambodians are located within six miles of the Cambodian border, which has made them targets for Vietnamese shelling. The whole border region is malarial, the surrounding land full of land mines. United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) provides all basic foodstuffs to these camps, as well as housing material (thatch and bamboo) and water to Site 2.[115] UNBRO and NGO staff only have access to these camps during the day, which has serious consequences for the safety of the refugees.

These border camps are supposed to be civilian camps, however Coalition soldiers use the camps as resting spots from their military offensives. When young men reach 17, they are drafted into the army of whatever camp they are in. Since 150,000 of the camp population are under 15, this ensures a continued supply of soldiers for the resistance forces.[116]

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[114] KPNLF, Sihanouk, and the Khmer Rouge are the three members of the Coalition of the guerilla forces fighting the Phnom Penh government.

[115] Jackson, 1987, p6-7.

[116] Jackson, p 13. Reports of boys as young as 15 years abound.

Khao I Dang is unique among the border camps. It is under the authority of UNHCR rather than UNBRO, and refugees in Khao I Dang have in the past been the only ones eligible for resettlement.[117] Therefore all the refugees that were interviewed in Edmonton spent most of their time in this camp. In the past many refugees have sneaked or bribed their way into Khao I Dang and occasionally there were sweeps of the camp to send people without papers back to other border camps. The medical and educational services available here are better than those in the surrounding Thai villages. There are temples and churches, and English classes offered by educated Khmer.

Phanat Nikhom, located two hours south of Bangkok, is not a border camp, and until recently(1989) it was only used to 'process' refugees who had already been accepted for resettlement. This processing includes having a medical examination, and usually receiving some kind of orientation and language training, which is provided by the country of resettlement. Therefore Phanat Nikhom has had a more hopeful and positive atmosphere. Although it is still being used as a processing centre, it is also a holding camp for Vietnamese refugees who now must go through the refugee status determination interview. Phanat Nikhom is scheduled to be closed some time in 1992, though several deadlines to close the camp have come and gone.

Except for a very small number who qualify under family reunification and who are allowed to be interviewed by special permission of the Thai government, Khmer people no longer have resettlement as an option. More and more of the refugees on the border wish to take vocational education courses which would prepare them for their eventual return to Cambodia.[118] They would return if they could be assured of favourable treatment by the Khmer government, and if they felt sure the Khmer Rouge will not ever return to power. This seems more and more difficult to assume as the Khmer Rouge continue to gain power. Repatriation is actively being pursued by the UNHCR, although these concerns remain unanswered. The political situation is far from stable, and the economic infrastructure in Cambodia cannot feed or employ its present population, let alone a large influx of people.[119]

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[117] Although at the time of writing no Cambodian refugees are eligible for resettlement.

[118] Berube, Rick "MCC Report on Refugees in Thailand" 27 Sept 1990.

[119] Ibid; Virrey, interview; The new military government of Thailand has just decided that all Khmer will be repatriated to Cambodia by May 1992.

Figure 2

SKETCH MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OF THAI/CAMBODIAN BORDER CAMPS SUPPORTED BY UNBRO

Scale: 0 50 Miles
0 50 Km

International Border

Roads

△ KR = Khmer Rouge

□ KPNLF = Khmer People's National Liberation Front

○ SIHANOUK = Followers of Prince Sihanouk

Satellite military camps *(hidden border)* not shown on this map.

Beneficiaries of UNBRO Food Distribution – as of December 1986

Huay Chan	8,375
Natrao	12,309
Green Hill	41,712
Site 2	143,711
Site 8	30,922
Bo Rai	3,438
Sok Sann	7,483
Ta Luan	4,238
Khmer Rouge	59,282
KPNLF	151,194
Followers of Prince Sihanouk	41,712
Total	**252,188**

B. Effects of Long Term Camp Stays

> We all know that an overwhelming feature of camp life, as it now exists and is rapidly worsening, is the widespread apathy, and growing feelings of despair, anguish and hopelessness...It is an outcome of camp conditions as well as a sense of alienation that perpetuates a vicious and demoralizing downward cycle. The denial of the opportunity and capacity to work towards a definable future erodes self-confidence and generates feelings of worthlessness. This, in turn, negates the energy and enthusiasm required to overcome the marginalization which breeds desperation and purposeless existence.[120]

The hopelessness of camp life is a theme on which much has been written, but little action taken to resolve. This became a major theme in Dr. Josephine Reynell's 1986 report to the World Food Programme: "The sense of hopelessness and despair here is pervasive and reflected in a commonly repeated phrase, 'We have no future, we are just waiting to die'"[121] After visiting three Khmer border camps she observed that visible symptoms of psychological stress were widespread. Anxiety about the next shelling attack, lack of safety within the camps, lack of physical freedom, lack of ability to meet even their basic needs themselves, uncertainty about their future– all of these things make refugees respond by withdrawing into themselves. As one Khmer said, 'If I thought about the future then life here would become unbearable'."[122]

Research is just starting to focus on the effects that long-term camp life has on the inhabitants. This question is especially important for children born in the camps who have known no other life. In 1987, nearly 30% of the Khmer camp population was under four years old.[123] In a camp situation, the daily life experience of children –sensory, emotional, social– is limited. Children are deprived of cultural activities and ritual. Emotional support from parents may also be limited, since adults are often depressed and apathetic themselves and simply have nothing to offer.[124] The same stresses exacerbate domestic violence against spouses and children. The effect of this stress is cumulative and has long term negative consequences. This also has ramifications for the future life chances of adults and children whether they return to Cambodia or go to a resettlement country.[125]

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[120] Kim 1988 p 2, in Reynell p 4.

[121] Reynell, p 157.

[122] Jackson, p24; Reynell, p 156.

[123] Reynell, p 14.

[124] Dyregrov and Raundalen, 1987, 123 in Reynell p 160.

[125] Reynell p 160.

As early as 1955, a sociologist conducting research in refugee camps proposed that the atmosphere and characteristics of a refugee camp would affect refugees' self-concept and goal formation. Refugees are usually isolated from the population of the country in enclosed areas guarded by soldiers, which they are not allowed to leave. Decisions are made for them, there is little to do, they lack privacy, they have little or no control over their lives.[126]

Reynell compares this atmosphere to that of 'total institutions'— a term coined by Goffman who uses it to describe institutions such as asylums, prisons, army barracks, and boarding schools. For the Khmer people who had to live on the collective farms under the Khmer Rouge there has been a continuity of the experience of living in closed institutions since 1975.[127] This atmosphere raises serious questions about the adequacy of such camps as living environments for large numbers of people over a period that has stretched to twelve years or more.

Prolonged concentration camp experiences also affects the refugees' ability to resettle. Most Cambodians who have mental health problems suffer from 'Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome'. Based on his experience with Khmer psychiatric patients, Kinzie describes this as: "...a state of being in which the person is exhausted by images that can neither be assimilated nor cast aside"[128] Some of the symptoms that the Khmer people report are: loss of interest in their environment, difficulty relating to spouses or children, and feelings of guilt for having food and being alive when loved ones didn't make it. Another symptom noted by Kinzie as being unique to Khmer refugees is the emotional numbing which is manifest in the way that they relate the most horrific experiences without showing any emotion. He suggests that the repression of emotion, which was necessary during the Pol Pot era, has become permanently fixed in the personality.[129]

Therefore, considering the inferno that the Khmer people have been through in the past 20 years, the question that should be asked is not, "Why do Cambodians have more difficulties in resettling, why are they on welfare longer than other groups?", but "How are they able to cope at all? How are they able to return to normal living and continue to struggle with a new culture and language?" The fact that they *do* continue to learn and struggle and hope for their children is not a tribute to the success of any settlement programs, but to the incredible strength of the human spirit.

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[126] HBM Murphy in Stein, Berry and Tomasi. The Refugee Experience: Defining the Parameters" International Migration Review, Vol 15:1, 1981, pp 321-329. This includes what country they are resettled in- if refugees refuse to go to the country which has chosen them, they are told that they will not be eligible to apply to another country.

[127] Reynell, 1989, p 17. Though those who live in camps that are not controlled by Khmer Rouge express that even life in the camps is infinitely preferable to life under the Khmer Rouge.

[128] Kinzie, "The Concentration Camp Syndrome Among Cambodian Refugees", unpublished paper.

[129] Kinzie, p 16.

C. Description of Participant Observation Setting: Phanat Nikhom Camp

1. The Physical Setting

Phanat Nikhom camp, located 100 km. south-east of Bangkok, is a half hour drive from the town of Phanat Nikhom where the foreign workers live. The camp was opened in July 1980 as a processing centre for all Indochinese refugees (Khmer, Vietnamese, Highland and Lowland Lao) who were transferred from other refugee camps in Thailand so that they could be interviewed and prepared for resettlement. The primary countries still resettling refugees are the United States, Canada, and Australia. 450,000 refugees have been processed through this camp since it opened. The camp population as of February 1991 was 22,592 of which 67% were Vietnamese, 16% Hmong, 15% Lowland Lao, and 2% Khmer.[130]

The camp is now also being used as a reception centre where post cut-off Vietnamese asylum-seekers (those arriving in Thailand after March 14th 1989)[131] are taken to await their eventual transfer to the screening centre of Sikhiu. At Sikhiu they will be screened to determine refugee status. Of the 67% Vietnamese mentioned above (roughly 15,000), only about 10-15% will be screened in as refugees. Those screened out have the choice of either returning to Vietnam with financial support from the UNHCR, or remaining in a prison-like holding camp with very inadequate living conditions. They will not be resettled. Rick Berube, the Refugee Concerns coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), wrote in his September 1990 report: "[Phanat Nikhom] camp is being transformed very rapidly from a resettlement camp into a holding centre (like Khao I Dang). The mood of the camp is changing and repatriation, unheard of in 1989, is now being discussed as a real option for many." This assessment proved to be very accurate, as five months later the Vietnamese refugees who were screened out, and those awaiting screening, protested against what they perceived as forced repatriation.

Phanat Nikhom camp is physically divided by a road into two parts . Originally these two sections of the camp had different functions: one side was used for processing and preparing the refugees for resettlement (PC= processing centre) and the other side housed those refugees awaiting imminent transit (TC= transit

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130 Any statistics referring to numbers of refugees in the camps in this description should be viewed as approximations; it is difficult to obtain accurate numbers. All statistics listed are from the Public Information department of the UNHCR in Bangkok, 1991

131 The Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) was signed in March 1989 by the 5 countries of first asylum, the major countries of resettlement, and the Vietnamese government. This agreement addressed the problem of the continued exodus of Vietnamese boat people. Part of the plan states that after the cut-off date of March 14 1989, Vietnamese asylum seekers would no longer be given 'prima facie' (group) refugee status. They are now individually screened by the first asylum countries. In conjunctions with this plan the Vietnamese government agreed to increase the numbers of people leaving through the Orderly Departure Program (ODP).

centre). As the camp began to be used for the reception and screening of Vietnamese, this neat division evaporated.

The processing side of the camp is now split into three sections: one section is for Lowland and Highland Lao and Khmer who have been selected for resettlement (7,845); one section is for Vietnamese people awaiting transfer to Sikhiu (14,073); and one section is for Vietnamese people whose refugee status is pending or denied (no number is given for this group). The Transit side of the camp, which is where the Canada School is located, contains the Vietnamese who have been accepted for resettlement (including those going to Canada), the Lao who have been accepted by Canada (1,447 in all), and a group of 785 Vietnamese who are eligible for resettlement but have not been chosen by any country.

FIGURE 3
ORGANIZATION OF PHANAT NIKHOM CAMP

Processing Centre (P.C.)	**Transit Centre (T.C.)**
Lao (Lowland and Hilltribes) and Khmer (including Canada-bound Khmer) selected for resettlement: 7,845	Vietnamese accepted for resettlement (including Canada-bound)
Vietnamese not yet screened awaiting transfer to Sikhiu (section S1, S2): 14,073	Lao refugees who are Canada-bound: 1,447
Vietnamese whose refugee status is pending or denied (section O)	Vietnamese 'Longstayers'- those who are eligible for resettlement but have not been accepted for resettlement
	Vietnamese voluntary repatriates awaiting departure for Vietnam

The length of time that the refugees who will be resettled stay in Phanat Nikhom varies between the different groups. The Lao and Khmer stay in the camp an average of seven months, but for the Vietnamese the wait is much longer. Many Vietnamese have been in the camp for two years, and a few who have had medical problems have been there for as long as five years.

The Thai Ministry of the Interior (military) is responsible for camp administration, and supervision of agencies in the camp. To date, there are 16 agencies operating in the camp– 6 which implement language and cultural

orientation for resettlement countries, and 10 which provide medical and healthcare services. About 3000 refugees are employed by these agencies.

2. *The Political Setting*[132]

On the evening of March 3rd 1991, the Vietnamese residents in Phanat Nikhom who had been screened out and were to be moved to Sikhiu camp the next day staged a demonstration. It is the intention of the Thai government and the fear of the Vietnamese people, that from Sikhiu these people will be sent back to Vietnam. This demonstration became an opportunity for the Vietnamese to vent pent-up frustrations, and it rapidly escalated into a full-scale riot which continued through the 4th and the 5th of March.

The initial cause of the riot was to stop the Thai military from sending the screened-out Vietnamese to Sikhiu camp. Another concern that was later voiced in a meeting between the leaders of the Vietnamese community, the embassy officials, and the Thai military (which a few days earlier had become the Thai government via a coup!) was the arbitrariness of the screening procedure. The refugees were not being given reasons for negative decisions and were not able to appeal these decisions. The demands made by the Vietnamese leaders at this meeting were:

1. to review the Comprehensive Plan of Action.
2. re-screen all asylum seekers, and improve the screening procedure.
3. suspend the movements of people to Sikhiu.
4. cease forced repatriation.[133]

None of these demands were met. The refugees were told by the Thai government that no further screening would be carried out in Phanat Nikhom, and that if they wished to be screened they would have to move to Sikhiu. They were told by the Embassies that no new offers of resettlement would be made at the next Paris Peace Conference and that those who were eligible for resettlement under the Family Reunification Plan must return to Vietnam to be processed.

Foreign workers were not allowed into the camp from March 4th-17th. Two teachers from the Canada School and one teacher from the Quebec School had their camp passes taken away after they were identified in photographs talking to the refugees at a time when the teachers should not have been in the camp. These teachers were trying to ascertain how many people had been killed, jailed, or wounded. There is evidence that the official report of the Thai military, claiming that no one was killed, is not correct.

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[132] The following description of the events surrounding the riot is compiled from a meeting that I attended where reports were given by the Thai military, the UNHCR, and three embassies. Some information is also from interviews with foreign workers who were present during some of the events.

[133] At the time of writing there has been no known force repatriation (other than the 50,000 Khmer in June 1979), perhaps the Vietnamese asylum seekers anticipate this in the near future.

For the Vietnamese refugees, the opportunity to take some action, to express themselves publicly, was itself a kind of victory. As one young refugee expressed: "We have humbled ourselves so much...Vietnamese are very mild, but that doesn't mean that they don't fight back when they must!!" Since the Vietnamese have been historical enemies of the Thais, Lao, and Khmer, there has always been a certain degree of animosity between these groups. Relations between the Vietnamese and the other groups became further strained.

This was the atmosphere in which I was to begin my research in the camp. I started working the first day that foreigners were allowed back into the camp. I replaced one of the teachers whose camp pass had been revoked. Camp rules which had previously not been enforced were now to be strictly obeyed. The Canada School, in particular, was being closely watched since the two foreigners labelled as 'trouble makers' were from this program. We were not to take any pictures or visit with our refugee-students outside of the classroom area, we could not wander around the camp at will, but we were limited to the areas where we had legitimate business.

Consequently, I felt that it was best for the program and for the refugees if I did not attempt to conduct interviews, as this could easily have been misinterpreted by the Thai military. My role as participant observer was limited to participating as an English teacher in the Canada School, observing what I could of the camp surroundings and the life of the refugees, and interviewing the foreign workers. I was, however, able to discuss many topics with refugees in the context of teaching.

3. The Setting From the Eyes of the Participant Observer

As you drive down the road from the town of Phanat Nikhom the first sign of the camp is the presence of a barbed wire fence surrounding barrack-like buildings with roofs of corrugated iron. The fence seems more symbolic than functional since it would be (and is) very easy to get in and out. For each half of the camp on either side of the road there is a gate with a guardhouse and a barrier across the road. Refugees and foreign workers alike need passes to cross from one side of the camp to the other.

The vast majority of the camp is off-bounds to me. I cannot go to visit my students' homes even when invited. However I pass by some living areas on my way to 'legitimate' places. I see people in hammocks, people preparing food, kids wandering around. At the sight of a foreigner the kids invariably yell 'hello!' and sometimes 'how are you!'. I hear it wherever I walk– 'hello! hello!'. I begin to wonder if they know any other words.

The atmosphere has an aura of waiting. Waiting to find out when you go, hoping nothing goes wrong in the mean time; waiting for April to pass. It is the hottest month of the year and without the rain there is not enough water.

The classrooms of the Canada School are rectangular rooms with bamboo walls with windows cut out, tin roofs, and ceiling fans. Several of the classrooms have beautiful murals that refugees have painted on the outside wall. I write on a whiteboard at the front of the room. There are always faces listening in at the windows. Most of the students are Lao, a few are Vietnamese. Initially the Lao and Vietnamese were in separate classes because of racial tensions. The classes are mixed this time, and though the groups seem to prefer their own company, there is no overt tension. However, the Vietnamese won't leave their children at the daycare run by a Lao woman.

There is a restaurant which caters to the foreign workers in the camp. It is run by local Thais (with a cut to the military) who hire refugee waiters. One of the waiters is a middle-age Vietnamese man who has a masters degree in public administration. I assume he is middle-aged, but sometimes the refugees simply look older because of a hard life and poor health. I feel sad and angry when I see him *running* to serve us. The reality is that he may well have the same job in the United States since his degree will mean nothing.

At 6:00 all foreigners must leave the camp; the Thai guards and the refugees remain. As I walk through the town of Phanat Nikhom, occasionally I glimpse a Thai person who looks like one of my students. Several times I have almost called out the student's name, then I remember they cannot leave the camp. Essentially they are prisoners. One hears of so much violence in the camps— caused by refugee gangs, by the Thai military— drugs, drinking, rape, prostitution. This month in Site 2 one refugee threw a grenade into a party, killing 24 people, because his girlfriend had left him. Life is cheap. One also hears of refugees who have money bribing their way out and spending the weekend in Bangkok or Pattaya Beach.

There are dogs everywhere in Thailand and they seem to have a similar status to that of cows in India: they are not to be killed, but neither are they taken care of. For me these dogs became a picture of the position of a 'displaced person'— the arbitrariness of belonging, of privilege. Some of the dogs are well-groomed and fed because they belong. Other dogs who do not belong live on food scraps and are chased away with stones. They are taken to the Buddhist temples because there is nowhere else for them, and they join the animal slum, which could be a scene out of Oliver Twist. By some twist of fate, some creatures belong and others don't:

> Worst of all for [the refugees] is the feeling of rejection. Very often they return from their interviews with the

embassies with the word 'rejected' stamped on their files. This is the worst form of punishment, for this highly significant word describes their plight perfectly: these are the people nobody wants. There is no room for them in our world.[134]

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[134] Pierre Ceyrac, a French Jesuit who has been working on the border since 1980, quoted in Refugees magazine, UNHCR, Nov 1990.

4. A Day in The Camp

The following is a description of the daily activities of a refugee in the camp based on discussions with several different people.

Thanh gets up at 6:00 a.m. His wife Anh makes breakfast for him and their baby. They do their washing, economizing on water since they are limited to one bucket of water per person per day, for drinking, cooking, and washing. Thanh will attend classes at the Canada school in the morning, and his wife will attend in the afternoon, so that one of them is always free to take care of the baby. The baby has often been sick, and taking him to the clinic doesn't seem to help.

Thanh will make the lunch– they will cook their food with another family to save on fuel. Then one of them will go to the Thai market in the camp to buy extra food. If they had to only depend on the rations they receive from the UNHCR they would be hungry. These are the rations for one adult:

3.5 kilos of rice per week
300 ml. of oil per week
150 grams of fish per week
150 grams of meat Mondays and Thursdays
300 grams of vegetables Mondays and Thursdays
salt and fuel for cooking.

But Thanh is glad he is no longer living in a border camp because UNBRO just cut food rations to below subsistence level due to a financial crisis. Here, few programs have been cut.

Some mornings Anh goes to a sewing class to learn how to sew. They do not have the industrial equipment which would have given her a useful skill to help her gain employment in Canada, but it helps to pass the time. Thanh is regularly called for clean-up duty, which involves collecting garbage around the camp. His name is on the 'volunteer roster' because he does not have an official job with one of the agencies in the camp. These agencies are only allowed to pay the workers 100B per month ($5.00 Canadian), which would not buy enough extra food, Thanh has no relatives overseas to send him money.

Instead, Thanh sneaks out of the camp every night after an early supper and works in a Thai bakery. The Thai owner of the bakery has bribed the guards so that Thanh can get in and out. The camp runs on bribery. Thanh feels that there is still some risk involved, but he has no choice. He works from 6:00-p.m. to 12:00 a.m. at this bakery. If he wants to eat any of the food he must pay full price. He is paid 30B per night ($1.40 Canadian) which is just over half of what a Thai worker would make. Many refugees work illegally in Bangkok as construction workers, and live in shanty town on the construction site.

Sometimes at night there are videos that the refugees can see for 5B. I read about an incident in another camp where a refugee was murdered outside his house because he raised the price of the video night from 3B to 5B. Sometimes people visit with each other, play music, talk, or quietly drink. Alcohol is not allowed in the camp, but you can buy anything from the Thai market. Just don't get caught, because the stories about the treatment of refugees in the prisons make one careful, and you don't want to ruin your chance for resettlement.

Thanh's eyes are haunted. He has been in the camp for two years and has watched many people come and go. Something went wrong with the group sponsorship and he cannot get any information from the Canadian Embassy. He doesn't understand why the Canada school can't help him. In fact, if his te cher manages to find out the date of his flight she is not allowed to tell him. He and his wife had their medical examinations in January, which is a good sign, but what if the baby gets very ill before they leave? People have committed suicide when at the eleventh hour some illness is discovered which would hold back the entire family indefinitely. Thanh and Anh have been through hell to get this far; hope is so tantalizingly close that it hurts. They won't give up now, but the waiting is hard.

D. Past Canadian Pre-departure Programs in Indochina

The need for language and orientation programs in the refugee camps was recognized by two NGOs, both of which managed to conduct cultural orientation programs for several years despite the lack of federal funding. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) operated Programs in Phanat Nikhom Transit Camp in Thailand since 1981, and World University Services of Canada (WUSC) has done likewise in Malaysia since October 1987. Since these organizations did not receive funding to be able to offer extensive ESL classes, refugees going to Canada have usually had to rely on English classes provided by other countries or organizations. This has been a cause of some embarrassment to Canadian volunteers, since Canada is also one of the strictest countries in terms of language requirements for resettlement.[135]

1. WUSC- Malaysia[136]

The goals of the WUSC program, formed by two Canadians who had been doing volunteer work in the camps, were based on their perceptions of what was needed by refugees. Their observation was that the most immediate need for refugees in the camps is to have a sense of purpose. Therefore, the goals of the

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[135] However the province of Quebec has been funding an FSL program in Phanat Nikhom since 1981. Interviews with Linda Holms, CEIC, Aug 31, 1990; Laurie Guglich, WUSC, Sept 8, 1990

[136] Information on the WUSC program was provided by Laurie Guglich, director from 1987-89, and a description of the program provided by the current volunteers.

program were formed around the needs that refugees had in the camps, rather than being focussed on their resettlement needs in Canada. Also, the limited amount of time available for orientation (1 or 2 weeks as compared with the 6 month U.S. program) meant that it was simply not realistic to try to address future resettlement needs in depth. The stated goals of this program are to provide refugees with the following:

1. A diversified background of information for the new immigrant so as to minimize the dislocation they will face during their resettlement process in Canada.
2. A sense of belongingness and identity in the camp in order to reduce attitudinal problems that can arise from feelings of dislocation.
3. A reduction of pre-departure anxiety and fear.

In setting up this program , Laurie Guglich, its director from 1988-89, was given funding by CIDA to conduct an information-gathering trip across Canada. She interviewed CEIC workers, settlement workers, and refugee leaders, and asked them what should be included in an overseas orientation program. The most frequently-cited topics were: how to fill out forms, making phone calls, air transit, relationship of refugee to sponsor. The curriculum for this orientation was compiled based on this research.

CEIC chooses not to require that refugees stay in the camps longer than the paper work takes, so any orientation must occur between the time that refugees are chosen by Canadian immigration and the time they leave for Canada. WUSC volunteers decided to give this orientation during the last part of the refugees' stay in the camp— after the flight is confirmed— so that motivation is high and the information will be fresh in their minds. Because flight lists were usually provided with short notice the cultural orientation initially had to be compressed into 20 hours given in one week., All information was translated into Vietnamese, so the time available for the actual content in English was 10 hours. When immigration officers were assigned to Kuala Lumpur, information was more readily available, and so orientation time increased from 20 to 40 hours taught in two weeks.

The WUSC volunteers felt that it was best to use a formal Vietnamese style of teaching with which the refugees would feel comfortable. They would lecture slowly using simple English so that those who had some English could follow. This lecture was translated into Vietnamese, then the information was written on the board, and the Vietnamese would copy it into notebooks. There were usually hand-outs and worksheets on the day's topics. An exam was given at the end of the course with certificates awarded based on attendance. Some films and videos were available from the Canadian embassy.

Laurie Guglich reported that there was considerable formal and informal refugee input into the planning and implementation of the program. Informal feedback included the refugees' presence in the classes, since participation is voluntary. As well, many refugees wrote letters to Laurie from Canada giving her feedback on what part of the program was helpful and what challenges they faced. A formal evaluation of the program by the refugees was conducted at the end of each session. These formal and informal means of evaluation provided positive feedback on the program.

FIGURE 4
CURRICULUM CONTENT OF CANADIAN OVERSEAS ORIENTATION PROGRAM (40 HOURS)

1. Background on Canada: geography, history, climate, economic factors, culture, leisure activities.

2. Legal and Democratic Concerns: government structures, voting, civil and criminal law, court procedures.

3. Housing: locating a home, landlord-tenant relationship, complaint procedures, moving from your dwelling.

4. Employment: documents, work ethic, types of work, salaries, job search techniques, unemployment coping strategies.

5. Money, Banking, and Budgeting: 'money-to-goods' ratio, accessing bank services, proper budgeting, taxation.

6. Community Resources: CEIC, Immigrant aid agencies, schools, police, fire, ambulance, post office, public transportation.

7. Household Care: telephone, diet, cleanliness, shopping, home safety, saving money around your home.

8. Medical and Dental Care: documents, hygiene, household treatment, emergency procedures, doctor's office and clinic procedures, hospitals.

9. Multi-Ethnicity in Canada: Canadian mosaic, preserving cultural identity, dealing with discrimination, culture shock.

10. Transit Procedure: pre-flight, in-flight, and post-flight procedures, what to expect and appropriate behavior.

FIGURE 5
WUSC CULTURAL ORIENTATION CURRICULUM BASED ON A 5 DAY/20 HOUR PROGRAM

Day 1

Geography: Geographic locations, economy, population demographics

Responsibilities to and of Sponsors: Government, private, church groups.

NFB Films

Day 2

Government and Law: Three levels of government, communism vs.democracy, civil and criminal law.

Community Resources: CEIC, CEC, Settlement Agencies.

Educational System

Slides of Canada

Day 3

Employment: Documents needed (SIN) certification, filling out forms, types of jobs available, job interviews, writing resumes.

Day 4

Climate and Clothing

Multiculturalism: Discrimination and racism, cultural norms

Culture Shock

Transit Information: Preparation for the flight.

Day 5

What it means to be a Canadian

Cultural Preservation

Examination and handing out certificates.

2. MCC- Thailand[137]

MCC began programs in Phanat Nikhom in 1981 and closed its doors in October 1991. The size of the staff ranged from 1.5 to 4 people. Because of the lack of federal funding, the resources did not exist to do more than offer services to select groups, so the programs offered were in areas where refugees were not already receiving services. MCC was able to set up a library, offer cultural orientation to Lao, Khmer, and Vietnamese, English language classes for Vietnamese, and a mother-child care program.

In 1985, MCC was encouraged by the Federal Government to submit a proposal to the Secretary of State to fund ESL. Three years later $15,000 was received. Two more staff were added, though the federal funding did not cover this cost. ESL was provided for Vietnamese refugees, but not for Khmer or Lao since ESL was available to them through another program. Therefore, from November 1988 to July 1990 ESL was offered to Vietnamese and cultural orientation was offered to all refugees.

The goal of the English classes was to begin or expand on the acquisition of English with the expectation that the refugees will continue to study in Canada. The classes were taught by native speakers and priority was given to lower level students. These classes were offered to all refugees 16 years and over and were organized around cultural orientation topics. MCC also encouraged the refugees to take advantage of other English programs offered in the camp.

The goals and objectives for the program were determined by the perceptions of refugee needs by the various MCC workers. Consequently every year new objectives and strategies were formed. The following is a list of the goals for the last MCC program.

Purpose of the program: To assist and support refugees in their resettlement needs and provide education to refugees bound for English Canada; to learn about, experience, share and participate in the life of the local Thai and Refugee camp communities.

Goals:

1. To act as an advocate on behalf of refugees experiencing difficulties with their acceptance for resettlement.

2. To be available to refugees on a formal and informal basis, to respond to concerns, offer options and help resolve problems.

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[137] The following description is compiled from interviews and a letter from Rick Berube, and a description of the MCC programs in Phanat Nikhom.

3. Identify appropriate unaccepted refugee families and make recommendations to MCC Canada for their possible sponsorship.

4. Offer a course of basic cultural orientation that will assist in preparing refugees for their new life in Canada.

5. Offer training in English as a Second Language for refugees bound for English Canada.

6. Identify refugees with untended needs who could be assisted with already established camp services, and work with them as individuals to find appropriate solutions.

7. Provide basic information about the Canadian system of immigration and resettlement to refugees and camp workers.

9. Relate and share information with the MCC constituency on refugee issues in Thailand and region, and on other matters of interest and relevance.

In light of the reality of the difficulties that refugees faced in the camp, MCC changed the focus of its program, which is reflected in the order of these goals. Providing orientation and ESL became secondary to the more basic concern of trying to act as mediator and advocate between refugees that needed extra help (those with valid cases who had been rejected, those who had simply been forgotten) and the agencies that were in the position to provide this help.[138] MCC was able to get hundreds of refugees to Canada after these people had been rejected. The organization is in a position to refer refugees to potential sponsors because of its connections with Mennonite churches in Canada. This advocacy role included passing on to refugees as much information as possible about immigration procedures and what to expect in the selection interview with the Canadian Embassy.

The staff viewed their availability to and relationships with individual refugees as another priority which indicates the personal and holistic nature of the program. They have had a particular concern for those refugees who fall between the cracks of resettlement procedures.[139]

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[138] It is not so surprising that the Canadian Embassy would sometimes lose files; the fact that refugees need a mediator to present their cases to the UNHCR field officer in the camp is a commentary on the lack of effectiveness of the UNHCR office in Phanat Nikhom.

[139] When I mentioned to the visa officer at the Canadian Embassy that some refugees in Phanat Nikhom 'fall through the cracks' in the system she denied this immediately and said that she knew the whereabouts every Canada-bound Khmer in the camp.

These priorities reflect Rick's opinion of the usefulness of orientation programs. He felt that though the refugees are interested in orientation topics, refugees in the camps may not be in the best frame of mind to commit a lot of energy to these programs. Their retention of detail will be limited, and the information will only be relevant in the resettlement context. Rick believes that helping refugees realize that they are capable of accessing information and services themselves in the resettlement country may be as important as actually trying to teach them the information.

> One of the goals outlined be MCC in its last year in Thailand was to
>
> "Develop a clearer understanding of the complex realities which affect displaced persons, their choices about leaving and their stake in returning home. Be especially sensitive to the possible complicity of the North American and Western nations in the suffering of people in this region of SE Asia."[140]

Rick expressed the need to be aware of how Canadian foreign policy affects this region. MCC workers in Thailand now consider repatriation to be an appropriate response, since the Comprehensive Plan of Action was put into effect in June 1989. They recognize the need for voluntary organizations to look at the larger picture of displaced persons in this region in the context of current political decisions and efforts. It is MCC's opinion that more effort should be put into resolving hopeless economic situations in these countries which cause people to flee.

Because of this understanding of the wider picture MCC chose to end its involvement in the orientation program in Thailand because it feels that agencies in the camps act as unintentional 'pull' factors which encourage people who are fleeing economic situations rather than political persecution to leave their countries. Whether this assumption is correct or not, one has to commend the moral integrity which at least asks and attempts to address the larger questions of root causes and durable solutions. Since most organizations are interested in self-perpetuation, the decision to end the program was noteworthy.

E. The Current Pre-departure Program[141]

The IOM Canada School began its first cycle of programs in Phanat Nikhom camp in December 1990. The MCC program had stopped its programs in August of that year, but continued to do refugee advocacy work until April 1991. In December there were approximately 1200 refugees waiting to come to Canada. Of these, 70%

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[140] Berube, MCC Report, September, 1990.

[141] Interview, Susan Knights, Coordinator, Canada School, Phanat Nikhom Camp, Thailand, April 1991.

were Lao, 25% were Vietnamese and 5% were Khmer. 258 students joined the first cycle of classes and 300 students were added part way through.

This program had a difficult beginning. Negotiations between IOM and CEIC seem to have been quite prolonged. I was aware in January 1990 that IOM had been chosen to provide cultural orientation and language training for Canada-bound migrants. A coordinator for the Thai program was not hired until November of that year and CEIC's deadline for the commencement of classes came two weeks after this person was hired.[142] At that point there were no classrooms, desks, benches, books, or teachers. It proved very difficult to access an accurate list of the refugees who would be going to Canada, which in turn made it difficult to formulate a list of potential students.

Organizational details were not the only difficulties to be overcome. For reasons that are only partly clear, this new program was not popular with the people whose cooperation would be needed in order for it to function. This included the Canadian Embassy, the IOM office in Bangkok and the IOM workers in the camp. There was inadequate communication between CEIC and the Canadian Embassy about this new program or what the relationship between the program and the Embassy might be. Also, no one was hired in the IOM Bangkok office to take care of the administrative duties that this program would entail. Hence, accepting this contract meant extra work for the people in this office which created some resentment and resistance. The situation improved after a visit from the IOM representative from Geneva.

Specific directions were not given to the program coordinator by CEIC or by IOM as to what the content and goals of the program should be. According to the goals stated in the Settlement Language Program manual, which the coordinator had access to, it was anticipated that the early provision of language training would facilitate the settlement process in Canada. It was not expected that the refugees would become fluent in the language, but that they would develop survival language skills and that they would realize the importance of language acquisition as a priority upon arrival in Canada. It was also hoped that the refugees would learn about their options to pursue language training in Canada, and that through the orientation they would develop a more realistic understanding of the settlement process.[143]

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[142] Refugees have been coming to Canada through this camp for eleven years. The Federal Government decided to provide major funding for overseas orientation at a time when other programs are in the process of closing down, and a year before the camp is scheduled to close. This may be part of the reason why the program was not popular.

[143] Settlement Language Program Manual: Oversea Programs, Ottawa: Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, 1990.

The audience targeted by CEIC are those people most likely to have language barriers in Canada. Since immigrant women have more difficulty availing themselves of language training and settlement services in Canada, their participation in the camp programs should be encouraged. This focus is to be commended since earlier language programs in Canada were targeted specifically to those refugees entering the workforce. However, this is a challenge to implement in the camps. A recent study conducted in Phanat Nikhom camp revealed that women's participation in classes is not equal to that of men, that there tended to be more women in the lower levels, and that very few women workers have been hired by the various agencies.[144] In compliance with this CEIC priority, the first program initiated by the Canada School was for a designation of single women refugees referred to as "Women at Risk".

It was suggested by IOM that the resource materials being used in the IOM Canada programs for Eastern European migrants should also be used in Thailand. These included: "Welcome to Canadian English" published by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, "Being Canadian", a cultural Orientation manual still in pilot form, and an American program, "Refugee Education and Employment Program"(REEP). These materials were not perceived by the teachers as particularly helpful and were not used as core teaching materials. A great many resource books were given to the Canada School by the American program (Consortium).

The program began with 18 teachers, 2 teacher supervisors and the coordinator, Susan Knights. By March the structure had become 'top-heavy'. Five people were in administrative positions— the coordinator, a materials/supply person, one person who organized statistics, and two teacher supervisors who had no teaching duties. Two of the teachers were promoted to a newly-created 'senior teacher position in which they taught one class and organized teacher training sessions. There were 12 regular teachers. This structure catered to a potential student population of 384 refugees. During the 10 years that MCC provided programs they had a staff of two to four people for a population of literally thousands of refugees coming to Canada.

CEIC preferred that IOM hire all Canadian teachers, rather than hiring Thais. This is likely in response to criticisms that have been voiced about the use of Filipinos (who could not be understood by the refugees) as language teachers in the American programs. This suggestion was not popular with the Thai authorities. In order to establish good relations several Thai teachers were hired. These teachers had as much or more experience and skill training than most of the Western teachers, however they would have difficulty in teaching pronunciation, or adding

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[144] See chart in Appendix.

Canadian content to the courses.[145] A few refugees did not want to study in the classes with Thai teachers. These students were accommodated as far as was possible.

It was not possible to hire only Canadian teachers since there were simply not enough Canadian candidates with appropriate experience in Bangkok. There were, however, teachers available who had practical experience from working with the American program. Consequently, the teachers that were hired were from Thailand, United States, Australia, Britain, as well as five Canadians. These people brought varying degrees of skill-training and experience, but all of them displayed creativity and dedication to the task and seemed to have good rapport with the students.

A list of all refugees going to Canada was provided by the Canadian Embassy. These people were tested and placed into classes according to their level of English. There were also two classes of children and one class of adolescents. The class size ranged from seven to twenty students. Teaching cycles were three months (90 hours) and refugees could keep attending classes as long as they were in the camp. There was also a cultural orientation program for one hour per week for 14 weeks, given in the refugees' language. Because the Khmer refugees were not moved with the Lao and the Vietnamese to the side of the camp which holds the Canada school, they were not able to attend the language program. They studied English with a Catholic organization, and a teacher from the Canada School went over twice per week to give classes in cultural orientation.

The goals of the program were not communicated clearly to the staff that were hired. Their understanding was that the goal would be to raise the refugees' English level from wherever they were starting, and to give them some information about Canada that would help them in coping with the challenges they would face during the first few months in the country. Therefore, the focus of curriculum was on 'survival English'.[146]

The curriculum provided a basic structure of topics, which were introduced at increasing levels of sophistication as the English level of the class increased. Curriculum topics[147] included: communicating personal information, time/weather,

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[145] The use of 'local' teachers is an issue currently under debate. Most of the Thai teachers working in this program were excellent teachers; some had better classroom skills than some of the native speakers. They were especially useful in the literacy level classes, since most refugees could understand some Thai, and at the lowest levels translation is often helpful.

[146] For example, a survival English lesson on 'how to catch a bus' would begin with pictures and explanations of the process involved (find the correct stop, look for the number, get on the front door, etc) and would review the questions that the refugee needs to ask in order to get from point a to point b: 'Which bus do I take to get to..., Where is the bus stop, Please tell me where to get off'. For those of us who have tried to take buses in foreign countries, we simply think of the phrases we needed to learn.

[147] Topics for refugee orientation and ESL tend to be the same across all manuals and programs that I have looked at- Canadian, American, overseas, and in the resettlement country.

money, making appointments, transportation. The lowest levels started with numeracy and phonetic decoding skills, and the highest levels would practice job interview skills.

A certain degree of flexibility existed in the Canada School program. This allowed the teachers to discern the needs and interests of a specific group of students, and gear the content and materials used to that group. This is in contrast to the Consortium program which has a very structured curriculum and teacher training program, and offers no room for flexibility and little space for creativity.[148]

Attendance at the classes was typically 100% for the Lao but less consistent for the Vietnamese. An absence form was filled out for a student who had missed three consecutive classes, and one of the refugees who worked for the Canada school would go to that person's home to find out why they were not attending class—whether they were sick, or they had gotten a job. Sometimes a student was not happy with the class level or the teacher, in which case changes were made where possible.

The students seemed glad to be in the program and were eager to learn. Whenever I prefaced a teaching remark with "In Canada people will say this", or "they will ask you this", their eyes would light up and they would lean forward because any language skill that they could learn made them feel more secure about their ability to function in their new country.

They generally knew what province they would be going to and sometimes what city. They did not know when they would be going and this was the cause of much anxiety. The refugees would not receive this information until a week or two before the flight departed when their names would appear on a publicly posted flight list. When this occurred the student would usually stop attending classes. There were many administrative details that needed to be taken care of during the last week, so all family members needed to be available.

This is an interesting dynamic since this spontaneous pattern of attendance was the reverse of the schedule chosen by the Canada School in the Malaysian refugee camp. The Malaysian program was only able to offer cultural orientation classes. They chose to run this class for the refugees after their names appeared on the flight lists. The reason given for selecting this time period was that the refugees would be more motivated once they knew they would be leaving soon, and there would be less of a time gap in which to forget what they had learned.

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148 This was the feedback I received from several former Consortium teachers. They all said that they preferred to teach with the Canada School.

The cultural orientation classes took place one hour every second day for a total of 15 hours. The classes were taught by two Canadian men who were aided by native language translators. These men have had extensive experience living and travelling in Asia, and so were able to give examples of their experiences with cultural differences. However, they felt that it would have been helpful to have had experience working with refugees in Canada.

As with the overall program, the goals for the cultural orientation were not explicitly stated, or at least not clearly understood until the IOM representative from Geneva (Kathleen Hamilton) came to visit. She stated that the main purpose of the orientation was to lower the expectations of the refugees as to what their life in Canada will be like. Both orientation teachers felt that their initial presentation had been too optimistic- that in a wave of patriotism they presented a very rosy picture of life in Canada.

Kathleen's feedback confirmed their suspicion that their content and approach needed to be more reality and survival-oriented. Both teachers stated that the new focus of the orientation was to lower the refugees' expectations and adjust their attitudes. One example of the need for a change in attitude is the way that refugees view the welfare system. From the comments that the refugees make their attitude seems to be that it would be foolish *not* to take advantage of welfare. The orientation teachers are afraid that refugees can develop a dependency mind-set, so that after a time on welfare they lose their motivation to become independent and take control of their lives. A second example relates to what was perceived as a pre-occupation with money. One teacher remarked that regardless of the topic being discussed, the questions that were asked frequently related to money— to salaries, to how soon one could buy a house and a car.

There has been no formal or informal evaluation of the language or cultural components of this program by the refugees. This is perceived as a difficult task for several reasons. The coordinator commented that the refugees tend to appreciate whatever is taught to them, and that even if they had criticisms of the program they may feel hesitant to communicate this for fear of appearing ungrateful or being labeled as a complainer. A formal evaluation would take a great deal of time and money since it would need to be translated into Lao and Vietnamese, then the responses would need to be translated into English. It was felt that it would be equally difficult to ascertain how much of the cultural orientation content was understood, or which topics were of more interest to the refugees.

FIGURE 6
IOM CANADA SCHOOL CULTURAL ORIENTATION CURRICULUM

1. Overview of Canada
2. Climate and geography
3. Winter
4. Healthcare, welfare, education
5. Housing 1
6. Housing 2
7. Employment 1
8. Employment 2
9. Employment 3
10. Banking and budgeting
11. Shopping
12. Telephones, public transit, mail
13. Culture shock, prejudice
14. Avoiding embarrassment

VI. CASE STUDY: INTERVIEW RESPONSES FROM KHMER REFUGEES AND SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN EDMONTON

A picture of life in the refugee camps and a description of the Canadian pre-departure programs has now been presented. With this background one is better able to understand the interview responses given by Khmer refugees who are now in the resettlement country. The research questions arising from the literature review were used as a foundation for the interview questions. These questions focussed on the refugees' perceptions of the usefulness of these programs and their goals for resettlement.

A. RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

1. Description of Khmer Population and Interview Setting

Khmer refugees were interviewed in Edmonton over a period of six months, from September 1990 to February 1991. Virtually all the contacts for refugees that were interviewed came through 'grapevine' networking within the Khmer community and through settlement workers. Thirty-eight refugees were involved in the study in a variety of different groupings:

1 group of 4 individuals
1 class of 17 students
2 married couples
13 individuals
1 person visited 8 times

It should be stressed here that since this is not a random sample, and the number of people interviewed is small, it is not possible to generalize from these results. In the group settings, and with the married couples, the refugees discussed the questions together in Khmer. On some questions they then gave a collaborative response and on other questions they answered individually. Those interviewed individually (15 men and 6 women) fell within the 25-35 age group. The class of 17 Khmer who were interviewed as a group were older. At the time of interviewing they had been in Canada from two weeks to eight years; the average time in Canada was fourteen months. Three of the interview sessions were conducted through a Khmer translator, and the rest in English. The interview population was composed of one community leader, four settlement workers; eleven people were studying ESL (plus the group of seventeen) and eight people who were working.

2. Interview Tool

A semi-structured style of interview was used. A core of questions was developed which related to my research question, but different questions were asked to different people depending on their experience, interest, language level, and the amount of time we had. Consequently, the numbers of total respondents varied on the charts where I attempted to quantify answers. These charts were intended to

provide a more visual indication of the frequency and variety of responses to the different questions, though the data from the interviews did not easily fit into chart form.

Each interview was conducted by the researcher. Most of the interviews were taped, though some people preferred not to be taped, in which case I took notes. In some interviews time was limited, so the questions were priorized. The average time of an interview session was one hour.

There are three factors that may have influenced the interview results that should be noted. First, many of those interviewed were attending ESL classes, which might have affected the importance placed on learning the language. Second, most of the interviews took place during a very cold Edmonton winter, which might have increased their perception of winter as a serious difficulty faced in Canada. As well, all of the interviews were conducted during an economic recession in Canada, which may explain the emphasis placed on finding 'any job'.

3. Purpose of Interviews

The comment was made in the presentation of the research question that refugees have not been invited to participate in defining their own needs and goals for resettlement, or what preparation they feel is best. Therefore this section of the research is meant to ameliorate this situation by giving refugees the opportunity to speak to these questions.

The purpose of these interviews was to gain the perspectives of Khmer refugees about resettlement- their experiences in adapting to a new culture and their views of the usefulness of pre-departure programs. This perspective can then be compared with observations made by settlement workers about these questions.

B. Summary of Interviews With Refugees

WHAT DID YOU KNOW ABOUT CANADA BEFORE COMING HERE?

Most refugees knew virtually nothing about Canada before attending cultural orientation classes, except that it is a cold country. In fact, several of them said that they didn't want to come to Canada because of the cold. Chin Lung observed that the majority of Khmer refugees now coming over are from rural settings, and have no clue about life in Phnom Penh, let alone Canada.

If they had any information about Canada prior to orientation, it was from letters sent to them from relatives or friends. They didn't seem to have gained much information from these letters. Some refugees have very high expectations of what life in Canada will be like because of letters they received when they were in the camps from settled refugees who want to portray themselves as successful. One

settlement worker related that a student asked him to take a picture of the student in front of a fancy car (not the student's car) so that the picture could be sent to the camp. This worker also said that when he himself sent a letter back to camp with an honest appraisal of the difficulties he was experiencing, his friends in camp thought he was lying so that he wouldn't have to send them money.

WHAT KIND OF PRE-DEPARTURE TRAINING DID YOU RECEIVE IN THE VARIOUS REFUGEE CAMPS BEFORE COMING TO CANADA?

Most of the refugees interviewed spent many years (3-10) in Khao I Dang, and were sent to Phanat Nikhom after being accepted to go to Canada. They stayed in Phanat Nikhom a further 4-12 months. There were ESL classes offered in Khao I Dang by Khmer teachers who knew some English. However these classes had to be paid for in Thai baht. Many of the poorer refugees could not afford this, especially the ones who did not know someone living overseas who could send them money. Some people stood outside the windows of the rooms to listen. Some stated that there was not enough food given to them in Khao I Dang, so extra money had to go to buy food before it went to pay for English classes. Several refugees also mentioned not having the time to study English because they were doing volunteer work for NGOs. This work provided them with extra money for food and enhanced their resettlement application.

As well as learning to speak English, there were other skills that could be learned informally through other refugees in Khao I Dang— sewing, tailoring, goldsmith. Some refugees worked in the hospital as nursing assistants. The refugee who came most recently from the camps commented that many refugees in the border camps don't bother learning about other countries because they have lost hope. If they are accepted for resettlement it is like being born again, then they have the motivation to study.

Most of the refugees who were in Phanat Nikhom after 1983 received some kind of Canadian cultural orientation, though it seems to have been rather limited. They spoke of having classes a few hours a day for a week, or one hour a week for a few months. Sometimes the cultural orientation was translated into Khmer, sometimes it was not. Some people attended English programs provided by other countries. Refugees that were in Phanat Nikhom before 1983 said that there was very little organized in terms of cultural orientation or English classes.

The refugees describe the Canadian cultural orientation as teaching them 'how to live in Canada'. Most of the topics that refugees recalled having been taught were practically oriented. These would include: shopping, dressing for winter, budgeting, renting accommodation, job hunting, and finding their way around.[149]

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[149] Some rather obscure topics that refugees mentioned learning about were ice fishing and how to make maple syrup!

Though language and job skills rate as two of the most important individual topics, when responses are organized into thematic categories, the topics relating to daily survival are most often cited by refugees.

TABLE 1
WHAT KIND OF ORIENTATION OR SKILL TRAINING DID YOU RECEIVE IN THE CAMPS?
(N=17)

orientation in Phanat Nikhom:

ESL	9
shopping	7
how to get a job	7
preparing for seasons	7
air transit	4
getting around/taking a bus	4
renting a house/apartment	3
budgeting money	2
cultural rules	2
getting medical help	2
Canadian laws	2
postal system	1
Canadian geography	1

ORIENTATION TOPICS TAUGHT IN CAMPS (ORGANIZED BY CATEGORIES)

Daily Life Skills*	26
Language and Job orientation*	16
Learning about Canada*	5
Other	4
Total	51

*Daily Life Skills: shopping(7), preparing for seasons(7), taking the bus(40), renting accommodation(3), budgeting(2), getting medical help(2), using the postal system(1).

*Language and Job skills: ESL(9), Job training(7).

Learning about Canada: cultural rules(2), Canadian laws(2), geography(1).

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM YOU FACED WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO CANADA (FIRST THREE MONTHS)?

Lack of English was the most serious problem for almost all Khmer when they first came to Canada. Knowledge of the language affects every aspect of their resettlement here— without English they are not able to shop, see a doctor, get around the city. The refugees and settlement workers agree that 20 weeks of ESL is not enough to prepare newcomers to be able to cope with the challenges of daily life and to compete for jobs.

The cold weather was cited frequently as a challenge to Canadian life. Many people were sick the first few months because they were not used to western food. One refugee brought canned food and a big bag of rice from Thailand, only to find a wide variety of Asian food available in Edmonton.

Loneliness is a problem mentioned specifically by the single refugees. This loneliness is not just for family and friends, but for a familiar environment. One refugee commented, "When I look around me I see that everyone is so different from me. I am used to walking around the camp, and even if I don't know the people, they are Khmer or Lao and I feel like I belong." The older Khmer and those who had been in Canada for two years or less expressed strong emotional ties to Cambodia and a real sense of cultural grieving. This grieving was not only for a loss of family, but a loss of country and culture. I think this sense of cultural loss is much more profound for the Khmer since it was brought about in their own country by their own people.

An issue identified by all of the refugees who are now settlement workers was the lack of knowledge of the programs that are available to the refugees who wish to continue their education . The priority of the Employment counsellors is to find refugees jobs. Unfortunately they are less likely to present the range of options even if they are aware of them. Two of the refugees who came to Canada around 1982 said that they had wanted to complete high school here, but they were told by employment counselors that they had to find work.

TABLE 2
WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM YOU FACED WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO CANADA?
(N=13)

	1st	2nd	3rd	Value*
Lack of English	8	1		26
Lack of familiar food	2	1		7
Shopping		3		6
Winter	1	1	1	6
Getting around	1	1	1	6
Couldn't pursue higher ed	1	1		4
Seeing a doctor			2	2
Different culture		1		2
Loneliness			1	1

* First choice—3 points
Second Choice—2 points
Third Choice—1 point

IF YOU WERE ABLE TO GO BACK TO THE CAMPS TO PREPARE PEOPLE TO COME TO CANADA, WHAT WOULD YOU TEACH THEM— WHAT DO THEY NEED TO KNOW?

This question was introduced by first asking whether programs in the camps were really necessary or whether this information should be given in Canada. Those refugees who had orientation in the camps felt that it had been helpful to them. Those who had no orientation felt that the transition was more difficult because of this. It would be very difficult for these programs to be a waste of time, since time is one thing the refugees have in large supply. It was generally agreed that the same topics need to be reinforced and expanded in orientation programs once the refugees arrive in Canada.

There was unanimous agreement that the priority of pre-departure programs should be to teach English, since knowledge of the language affects every area of resettlement. Whatever English the refugees were able to learn in the camps made the first few months easier. The content of the curriculum should be practically-oriented, beginning with the most basic survival phrases (I am hungry/lost/sick, I need help) and increasing in complexity for those who already have some language skills already.

As well as the need to learn the language, several of the same topics that had been identified as part of the curriculum they were taught were mentioned again. Again, emphasis was given to practical survival topics such as surviving winter, shopping, budgeting, job-hunting. Several refugees also mentioned the need to prepare newcomers for different legal norms and systems. Some Cambodians have been charged with shoplifting and spouse/child abuse due to cultural misunderstandings.

One refugee suggested that the orientation should balance presenting the positive aspects of Canada (several mentioned that it was a peaceful, free country) with a realistic view of life here, so that newcomers will realize that their struggles are not over and that they must work hard. After spending many years in the camps, refugees can develop a dependent mentality and low self esteem. They need to be encouraged to believe that they are still capable of learning and that they can take responsibility for their futures once again.

The issue of communicating options arises here again. The settlement workers felt that it was very important that refugees are told what options they have available to them for further education and job training. They need to be given an outline of this information in the camps, in case the settlement worker or employment counsellor neglects to inform them of such. Refugees tend to assume that they must do whatever the counsellor suggests and don't realize they may have other choices. This kind of information can give the refugees power to have more control over their lives.

TABLE 3
WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN THE CAMPS?
(N=18)

English	9	Visiting the doctor/healthcare	3
Winter/seasons	9	Relationship with sponsor	3
How to get a job	8	Spouse/child abuse	2
Shopping	7	Cultural traits	2
Budgeting money	7	Vocational skills	1
Law in Canada	6	Availability of Asian Food	1
Air transit	4	Canadian people	1
Buses, finding your way	4	Free, peaceful country	1
Renting house/apartment	3	Be responsible for your future	1

WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN CAMPS?
(ORGANIZED BY CATEGORIES)

Daily life Skills*	27
Language and Job Skills*	20
Learning about Canada*	12
Other*	7
Total	66

*Daily Life Skills: winter/seasons(9), shopping(7), budgeting(7), how to use the bus(4), renting accommodation(3), visiting the doctor(3), availability of Asian food(1).

*Language and Job Skills: ESL(9), how to get a job(9), vocational skills(1), be responsible for your future(1).

*Learning about Canada: Law in Canada(6), spouse/child abuse(2), cultural traits(2), Canadian people(1), free country(1).

*Other: air transit(4), relationship with sponsor(3).

WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR FUTURE IN CANADA?

Many of the refugees, even the younger ones, expressed modest personal goals. Some said that they would be happy with any job, some said that they would like to have job training for such occupations as barber, carpenter, nurses aid. These jobs imply a desire for upward mobility, from minimum wage unskilled labour to work that takes some training, but seems attainable.

When I commented to Heang on the modest nature of these goals, he explained that to express higher hopes would seem boastful to the Khmer. The Khmer settlement workers who were interviewed adopted a more western approach in answering this question by expressing higher goals. One settlement worker said that she would like to get her high school diploma, another is studying computer programming through correspondence, and the most highly motivated Khmer I have met has earned a degree and now works as a pharmacist.

Koh believes that the refugees' goals are related to their ability to speak English— younger people who can learn the language easier have higher goals; older people who have trouble learning the language lack self-confidence and have lower expectations for their future.

The future goals of the Khmer are principally for their children. Many of the older Khmer believe that their ability to succeed in the new country is limited, so the resources and energy must go to prepare the way for the next generation. They are concerned that their children receive as much education as possible so that they will have many career choices and a good future open to them. The parents would like to continue to improve their English in order to find better jobs, to be able to provide for their families.

Several refugees indicated that maintaining the Khmer culture is very important, and they worried about how they would impart this to their children who soon be speaking better English than Khmer. This goal of cultural maintenance often seemed to be in conflict with the desire for the children to be able to succeed in the mainstream society.

Only a few refugees mentioned sponsoring family members to come to Canada. This contrasts with the Vietnamese refugees, who will hope that one family member is able to escape and be resettled so that this person can eventually sponsor the rest of the family. In the case of the Khmer, the Pol Pot regime wreaked such havoc that there are often simply no surviving family members to sponsor.

A rather remarkable answer to this question was given by a 74 year old Khmer man who had been in Canada for a year. He said that living in Canada has

given him the opportunity to see how democracy works. If he had the chance he would go back to Cambodia to pass this experience on so that life in Cambodia would be better.[150]

[150] A 'Return of Talent' program is being set up by IOM in Bangkok. This program will provide the opportunity for skilled Khmer people to return to the Thai border or to Cambodia on a contract basis.

TABLE 4
WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR FUTURE IN CANADA?
(N=16)

	1st	2nd	3rd	Value
Education,future for children	6	2		22
Further ed'n: academic	3	1		11
Any job/ support family	2	2		10
A good job		2	2	6
Maintain Khmer culture		3		6
Further ed'n: vocational	1		1	4
Sponsor family	1		1	4
Happiness	1			3
Become a citizen	1			3
Help Cambodia	1			3
Participate in mainstream		1	1	3
Increase material wealth			2	2

C. Responses of Settlement Workers

There are two main settlement agencies in Edmonton which offer a variety of services to newcomers: Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (MCN) caters mainly to group sponsored refugees and Catholic Social Services (CSS) caters to government sponsored refugees. The third large agency, St. Barnabas Refugee Society, has a clientele consisting of Ethiopian, Salvadorean, and Cambodian refugees. They help with the sponsorship of refugees and provide individual counseling and advocacy. There are two smaller agencies: Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA) offers ESL to refugees who still need help after the year of government support is over, and Changing Together offers services to refugee and immigrant women.

At the planning stage of this research I anticipated interviewing three distinct groups of people: refugees, settlement workers, and government officials. However, four of the five settlement workers interviewed are Khmer, which resulted in an overlap between settlement workers and refugees. The Khmer settlement workers related their personal experiences and opinions as well as their observations about the Khmer refugees they have helped. Consequently, some of their responses were added to the summary of refugee interviews, and responses to more complex questions are in the following section which is specific to settlement workers. This section also includes the responses of John Chan, the non-Khmer settlement worker. Two people from MCN were interviewed, two people from CSS and one person from St. Barnabas.

HOW HAVE THE REFUGEES' GOALS CHANGED THROUGH THE TRANSITION PERIOD FROM THE CAMP TO CANADA?

The settlement workers identified the changing goals that refugees have at the different stages in their flight and resettlement. These goals reflect changes that are consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The first goal is to escape from war, from life-threatening situations and from communism. Once the refugees make it to the camps their goal is to have enough food, to be safe, and to get to a third country. Initial goals in Canada are still survival-related: to figure out how to get money from the bank, how to buy food, how to find a place to live. Once these immediate needs are met, they are keen to learn enough English to get a job, after which they want to know what training is available in order to secure better jobs.

Koh Tran suggested that goals depend partly on whether refugees are government or family sponsored. Often the initial goal of refugees who are sponsored by family or friends is to make enough money to become independent. Hence, they usually try to get jobs right away rather than studying English. Koh feels that this short-term goal of financial independence becomes a problem later when the refugees want to aim for a better job but lack the language ability. After a few

years they feel discouraged because they have not been able to integrate socially or economically.

WHAT IS SUCCESSFUL RESETTLEMENT?

One older refugee who is a community leader felt that successful resettlement meant having hope for their children's future- that they will receive a good education which will lead to a successful career. Success is also measured by cultural maintenance. He was afraid that the second generation would become assimilated and lose touch with Khmer culture. He said success is not being completely assimilated to Canadian ways; he would be satisfied if they retained 20% of the Khmer tradition.

John Chan believes that refugees should be equipped to participate in and contribute to society in whatever aspects they choose. Refugees are successfully resettled when they can function independently,and when their sphere of functioning is widened. He added that success means being able to live within a certain comfort level, since it is possible for a person to function independently but still be deeply unhappy.

One goal of the MCN orientation program is to build self-confidence, and to convince refugees that they can still learn: "They always think it's too late for them to start learning new things, because of their age, their background. They compare themselves with immigrants from other countries who look confident and in control, then realize these people don't speak English either"[151]

Koh Tran felt that success involves the refugees' ability to integrate into mainstream society and to be able to make future plans for better employment. The ability to attain these goals is related to their knowledge of English. John Chan stressed that settlement is a two-way street in which the host society also needs to make some accommodation and adjustment for the refugees. They need to feel that they are accepted by the wider society, which is a responsibility the host society takes on when it invites people to come and live here.

Goals for resettlement programs at MCN:

These goals have been formed through interaction with refugees and ethnic community leaders. MCN staff have constant contact and dialogue with these communities, as well as feedback from refugees who have been through orientation programs. This feedback allows them to identify appropriate content as well as methods of delivery. The settlement goals at MCN are:

1. To assist the newcomer to become adequately equipped to contribute to and participate in the economic, cultural, social, political life of Canada.
2. To help them prevent a prolonged and difficult settlement adjustment.

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[151] Interview, Moly Penner, Dec. 1990.

This can be accomplished by helping them to increase their awareness of some of the common problems and integration issues, such as:

-change of male/female roles
-discrimination
-securing and holding onto jobs
-lack of transfer of job qualifications
-cultural gap
-generation gap between parents and children.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES THAT THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY HAS EXPERIENCED IN RESETTLING?

All of the Khmer settlement workers stressed the enormous cultural differences between Canadian and Khmer culture and the additional gap between rural Cambodia and Canada. If a person is young and has had some previous education in Cambodia, she will have a better chance of resettling successfully in Canada. In this case it is possible to continue with school and the re-certification of previous job skills. The observation was often made that older refugees do not feel that they are able to learn either adequate English or job skills. Family violence has been a problem within the Cambodian community, though it was not clear with what severity. A lack of familiarity with Canadian law exacerbates some situations.

Chin Lung suggested that a fundamental resettlement difficulty for Khmer was still being dependent after a long period of time. Because the cultural differences are so vast, many refugees, especially women who have less English, are afraid to go outside their apartments. The sphere in which they are comfortable is very limited. This became evident in my visits with the Khmer woman with whom I regularly met. She would go to Superstore, to the doctor, to visit Khmer friends in the same apartment complex, but she spent most of her time in their apartment. This was mostly due to not wanting to go out in winter weather. When an outreach program was initiated by MCN, pockets of Cambodian families were discovered whose movement outside their apartment complexes, where a few other Khmer families lived, was extremely limited.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE KHMER WANT TO RELATE TO THE WIDER CANADIAN COMMUNITY?

Considering the cultural and rural background of the Khmer and the language barriers, it is not surprising that they find it daunting to relate to Canadians and may be satisfied to stay within the Khmer community. Moly expressed that the world has always been small for people from rural areas. They would only relate to those within the same village area. Women would stay home looking after children or younger siblings, so a limited circle of friends would seem normal to them.

Several refugees expressed a desire to get to know Canadians, but lacked the opportunities to form friendships. Their connections with Canadians seems to be limited to formal relationships, with settlement workers, sponsors, or ESL teachers. John Chan received reports that Khmer children had a much harder time than other refugee children integrating into school. For the first Khmer refugees who came to Edmonton in the early 1980's, there was no Khmer community yet established. Now there are more than 1200 Khmer in Edmonton which provides different opportunities for integration into a Khmer community.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF REFUGEES WITH AGENCIES?

There has been a significant change in this relationship since agencies have been able to hire refugees as settlement workers. Ten years ago Canadians were struggling to help refugees whose backgrounds they did not know.

There also seems to be a difference between the relationship with government workers and refugees. The refugees' experience with Canada Employment Centre (CEC) counsellors in the early 1980's was that they simply provided cheques; there was no personal counselling in response to individual needs or aspirations. Government bureaucrats are removed from the daily lives of refugees, are answerable to the system, and so lack flexibility. Koh Tran suggested that CEC needs to plan for the future employment possibilities of refugees, and to provide information on what training is available, and what kinds of jobs that are needed. If specific planning does not occur, then refugees end up remaining in minimum wage jobs– a waste of human resources.

Moly felt that the programs in the camps likely had no input from those they were aimed to help. "It's different if you talk to people who *work* in the camp (foreigners or Thais) and people who *live* in the camps; these people are not related, they are different classes and have different perspectives."

DO REFUGEES AND AGENCIES HAVE DIFFERENT GOALS FOR RESETTLEMENT?

Though all the Khmer settlement workers with whom I spoke gave a firm 'yes' to this question, they were not always able to articulate what this difference was. It seemed to revolve around employment goals. Although refugees who had higher level jobs in Cambodia have great difficulty transferring those skills, they stressed that refugees need to be presented with all opportunities available to them. They need to be encouraged so that they can develop self-confidence.

This sentiment was expressed emphatically by the Khmer refugee who became a pharmacist. When he arrived in Montreal, he was not given a chance to learn more English or continue his education; he was simply told to find a job. Fortunately, he later met someone who encouraged him to continue with his

education. He feels that when refugees are not made aware of all the options available to them, the government deprives them of the contribution that they could make to Canadian society as well as their rights as landed immigrants. Many refugees would like to have further English training, attend vocational programs, or complete their high school diplomas. They do not mind taking the low paying jobs for a limited period of time, but they do not want to remain in these jobs.

This issue does not hold the same importance for the Khmer refugees who are coming to Canada today, since they are largely rural people without education. It is not likely that many of them will want to get a high school diploma, but it is important to inform them of all the options available. They should be presented with a realistic picture without lowering their expectations of their own abilities to continue learning new skills. Neither is this issue the same for the young refugees who automatically are sent to school, but for refugees of working age. Many of them would like to continue their education, whether that means improving their English, or gaining some vocational skills.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE REFUGEE INPUT INTO THE PROGRAMS IN REFUGEE CAMPS?

The settlement workers agreed that people who are not refugees living in the camps cannot understand what these people have lived through and may have a distorted view of their needs. However, refugees who have never been to a western country would be equally at a loss to be able to determine what they need to know to function in this new setting. It is obvious from the gap in the experiences of these two groups that the people who can best determine what refugees in the camps need to know are refugees who have been through the resettlement experience. It is encouraging to see agencies hiring refugee settlement workers. Nevertheless, administrative positions which involve policy decisions are still almost exclusively in the hands of mainstream Canadians. I know of only one settlement agency in Britain which is directed by a former refugee.

D. CONCLUSION TO SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

Most Khmer were quite eager to speak about their experiences, though few had the language ability to explain their ideas in detail. People seemed to remember the particular topics that have been useful or are currently pertinent. I asked one Khmer woman on two separate occasions which were the most important topics to be taught in the camps. On the first occasion her suggestion was 'how to take a bus', and on the second occasion this had changed to 'how to find a job', since in the interim her most immediate concern had changed. Therefore, it would seem that the topics which refugees remember being taught in the camps are those which have had the most relevance in their resettlement experience.

As can be seen in Figure 7, a significant degree of consistency existed between the orientation topics that were taught in the camps, the suggestions for what *should* be taught, and areas identified as posing the greatest problems. The need for language training is identified as having the greatest import in each area. Consequently, the need for training in the settlement language cannot be over-stressed. Without language newcomers, are not able to access necessary services and the new country remains strange and seemingly hostile rather than a place for new beginnings and new hopes.

Second in significance to knowledge of the language is the category of topics related to daily survival needs. This would indicate that priority should be given to these 'survival' topics which are immediately necessary rather than the more theoretical information such as Canadian laws, government, and geography.

There is one notable exception to the consistency of these responses— none of the Khmer mentioned 'finding a job' as among the most difficult challenges they faced during the first few months in Canada even though the Khmer tend to have greater problems than most other immigrant groups in integrating into the job market.152 However,the topic of employment did arise as a strong theme in the identification of goals for the future. Adequate employment, then, is related to the attainment of future goals rather than to the immediate needs experienced soon after arrival. This can be explained largely because Khmer refugees coming to Canada always have a sponsor— either the government, a group, or relatives— and so money for their basic needs is guaranteed for at least the first year.

The Khmer settlement workers were able to answer different types of questions because of their ability to articulate ideas in English, their years of experience in Canada, and their experience with a broad spectrum of the Khmer community. They added a longer term perspective to the survival focus of those refugees new to Canada.

The average Khmer was able to describe personal goals but was not able to articulate what successful resettlement, as a general concept, might include. Although this could be viewed as a discrepancy in the goals between Khmer settlement workers and Khmer refugees, the difference is more likely a result of the stage of acculturation process in which each group is functioning.

One could ask, however, whether many of the Khmer will ever reach (or desire to reach) the stage of the acculturation process in which integration is even a possibility. Perhaps the cultural gap for a person from rural Cambodia, who has had

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152This is the observation of the immigration officials and settlement workers with whom I have spoken.

limited education and has spent ten years in a refugee camp is simply too great. One settlement worker suggested that older refugees from this kind of background will never be able to integrate. If one pictures oneself as a Westerner attempting to integrate permanently into life in the Cambodian countryside with no knowledge of the language or culture, one gets a sense of the enormity of what is being expected of these people. In this scenario it is easy to understand why a person's culture becomes so important and why future goals would be focussed on the next generation.

A minimum level of integration that was identified by settlement workers would be the ability to use mainstream services. Beyond that the suggestion was that newcomers should be equipped to participate in whatever aspects of the mainstream society they choose.

The issue of refugees being informed about all program options potentially available to them was a concern primarily of the settlement workers. There seemed to be varying degrees of anger they still felt when thinking of lost opportunities. These workers are now in a position to try to correct this deficit for the refugees now arriving. Lack of knowledge of opportunities was perceived by the refugees as the greatest gap between refugee and agency goals.

TABLE 1
WHAT KIND OF ORIENTATION OR SKILL TRAINING DID YOU RECEIVE IN THE CAMPS?
(N=17)

orientation in Phanat Nikhom:

ESL	9
shopping	7
how to get a job	7
preparing for seasons	7
air transit	4
getting around/taking a bus	4
renting a house/apartment	3
budgeting money	2
cultural rules	2
getting medical help	2
Canadian laws	2
postal system	1
Canadian geography	1

TABLE 2
WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM YOU FACED WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO CANADA?
(N=13)

	1st	2nd	3rd	Value*
Lack of English	8	1		26
Lack of familiar food	2	1		7
Shopping		3		6
Winter	1	1	1	6
Getting around	1	1	1	6
Couldn't possess higher ed	1	1		4
Seeing a doctor			2	2
Different culture		1		2
Loneliness			1	1

* First choice=3 points
Second Choice=2 points
Third Choice=1 point

TABLE 3
WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN THE CAMPS?
(N=18)

English	9	Visiting the doctor/healthcare	3
Winter/seasons	9	Relationship with sponsor	3
How to get a job	8	Spouse/child abuse	2
Shopping	7	Cultural traits	2
Budgeting money	7	Vocational skills	1
Law in Canada	6	Availability of Asian Food	1
Air transit	4	Canadian people	1
Buses, finding your way	4	Free, peaceful country	1
Renting house/apartment	3	Be responsible for your future	1

TABLE 4
WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR FUTURE IN CANADA?
(N=16)

	1st	2nd	3rd	Value
Education/future for children	6	2		22
Further ed'n: academic	3	1		11
Any job/ support family	2	2		10
A good job		2	2	6
Maintain Khmer culture			3	6
Further ed'n: vocational	1		1	4
Sponsor family	1		1	4
Happiness	1			3
Become a citizen	1			3
Help Cambodia	1			3
Participate in employment			1	1 3
Increase financial wealth			2	2

VII. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The hypothesis that was posed following the literature review anticipated a disparity between agency and refugee goals for resettlement since there appeared to be no refugee involvement in planning or evaluating programs. This disparity was expected in three areas: in the perception of the usefulness of pre-departure programs, in the model of acculturation preferred, and in goals for employment.

Several factors have influenced the interpretation of the hypothesis and should be noted before continuing with the analysis. First, since nothing has been written on Canadian overseas programs, the literature review for the research question and hypothesis depended largely on studies of American pre-departure programs. However, the fieldwork was undertaken with refugees in Canada and with Canadian programs. This has resulted in some interesting discrepancies between the hypothesis and the research results. Two other events which have altered my interpretation of results are the change in the organization running the program from MCC to IOM and the opportunity to be involved in the camp setting, even for a brief period of time.

The interpretation of the research data will be organized around an analysis of the hypothesis. The first area of analysis will be the resettlement goals of agencies and refugees. The three sub-points in the hypothesis will then be investigated. The last part of the interpretation will examine other themes that have arisen from the portion of the fieldwork undertaken in Thailand. The analysis of the hypothesis will conclude with recommendations based on this research.

A. GOALS FOR RESETTLEMENT

On one level the goals that organizations have for the resettlement programs are the same as the goals that refugees express for themselves: to learn the language and to find a job. But when the Khmer settlement workers were asked whether refugees and agencies have the same goals, they react to the question on a more emotional level. The question seems to be interpreted as meaning, "Do refugees and agencies have the same perspective?" One person answered this with a rhetorical question: "How could they possibly have?" The differences in perspective and in interpretation of goals are rooted in the vast disparity between refugees and agency workers in experience, understanding, and culture.

However, this makes certain assumptions about the nature of agencies and agency workers. At some point during the research it occurred to me that my use of these terms had changed, and that, in fact, I had never defined how I was using these words. From the literature review I had developed a stereotype that an 'agency' was

a large bureaucratic organization with strong ties to government; an 'agency worker' was white, middle class, and someone in a position of power over refugees.

These general categories began to break down as the research progressed. My first discovery was that the people who worked in the Thai camps could be called agency workers and should be distinguished from those working with settlement agencies in Canada, who are more accurately referred to as settlement workers. These two groups of workers are involved with different stages of the resettlement process and consequently have different goals and perspectives. Even within these two categories, individual workers will bring their own agenda, goals, and experiences. As well, agencies differ in terms of their decision-making structure, source of funding, and their contact with refugees.

Other than the obvious distinction between Khmer settlement workers and Khmer refugees, sub-groups did not appear within the sample of Khmer people that were interviewed. I would anticipate that with a larger random sample and more time spent in the Khmer community, sub-groups who had different resettlement goals may have arisen, possibly based on factors such as socio-economic background of family, participation in ESL programs, or whether the person is employed.

All of these factors considered together mean that the question of whether refugees and agencies have the same goals, becomes rather complex.

1. Agency Goals

Both WUSC and MCC are organizations which favour smaller community-based development projects. Consequently a grass-roots type of decision-making process was used by these organizations in the formation of programs for Indochinese refugees. In both cases the need for a program was identified by fieldworkers who were directly involved with refugees. There was considerable refugee input into the planning and implementation of these programs as well as informal evaluation by refugees.

Both organizations identified problems related to being in the camp setting as needing immediate attention. Preparation for a new life in Canada could only be undertaken after more primary needs were met. The WUSC volunteers perceived that the primary need for refugees in camps was to give them a sense of purpose which would improve the mental health conditions in an atmosphere which can be debilitating.

The needs of refugees in the Thai camps were even more basic. The primary goal of the MCC program in its last year of operation was to carry out advocacy work

on behalf of the refugees who were experiencing difficulties with their application for resettlement. This might mean that their case had been unfairly rejected, that complications arose with the sponsorship, or that a file had simply been lost.

This goal of refugee advocacy was expanded to include a concern for the larger issue of the effect that the presence of western NGO's in the camps has in encouraging people to leave their countries because of the perceived opportunity for resettlement. Part of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) for Vietnam was an information campaign organized by the UNHCR, to inform people in Vietnam of the situation in the camps and the lack of opportunity for resettlement. This program has had limited, if any, success.

In contrast to the grassroots nature of these two organizations, IOM is a large Geneva-based international organization which has a top-down decision-making structure. Rather than beginning with the recognition of the felt-needs of refugees, then creating a program to fill those needs, they began with a contract with the Canadian government. This type of structure and funding produces different questions. Rather than asking, "what are the needs of refugees who are going to Canada?" the question becomes, "How can the contract be fulfilled?"

The coordinator that was hired to initiate the IOM program was not clear as to what the goals for the program were, and so the teachers that she hired were also unclear. Because of their constant contact with refugees, MCC and WUSC had clearly articulated goals which IOM lacked. The one task that was unacceptable to IOM and its funder, the Canadian government, was the goal which had been the top priority of MCC: advocacy on behalf of refugees.

The most significant difference in goals between agencies and refugees in the camps revolves around the issue of advocacy. The most pressing need that the refugees had in Phanat Nikhom was to have certain knowledge of their acceptance for resettlement and to know when they will leave. Lack of information in this area has the most detrimental effect on the refugees' mental health, which obviously will affect their ability to concentrate on learning a language. One refugee related that, "If the refugees won't be resettled they don't care about learning anything, they have no hope. But as soon as they are accepted it is like being born again."

This change in the emphasis of goals suggests a connection between program goals, organizational structure, and source of funding. Goals will be influenced by the structure of the organization— whether decisions are made by fieldworkers who have daily contact with refugees, or by administrators in a head office. The amount of control that the funder chooses to maintain will also affect the freedom that the organization has in determining the goals.

Because MCC did not receive government funding for this program, it was free to conduct advocacy work, even if this activity was not supported by larger bureaucracies (CEIC, UNHCR). IOM was not free to make these decisions since the funding for the program came from the Canadian government. The connection between these factors is illustrated in the following chart.

CHART 3
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STRUCTURE OF ORGANIZATION, SOURCES OF FUNDING, AND PROGRAM GOALS

(based on observations of programs in Indochina for Canada-bound refugees, run by WUSC, MCC, IOM)

Structure	*Relationship Between Refugee And Agency*	*Program Goals*
Community-Based	horizontal relationship-more (though not completely) egalitarian; attempt to share information, if not power.	determined by fieldworkers based on contact with refugees
Top-Down	vertical hierarchical relationship; agency controls power and information	determined by administration in head office rather than by fieldworkers

Source Of Funding	*Program Goals*
Independent	independent of government agenda, based on perceived needs of refugees; advocacy is possible
Government	based on government directives and priorities; cannot respond to refugee needs when these needs conflict with government agenda; no advocacy

2. Agency Worker Goals

To a certain extent the lack of clearly articulated goals in the IOM program may not have made a great difference since individual teachers will interpret goals and curricula according to their own agenda. Their experience, political background, personal reasons for working in the camp will determine what they teach, or if there is a curriculum, what is emphasized and how it is interpreted. Even in an organization with a top-down structure, the fieldworkers will have the most influence with refugees and will be the most aware of refugee needs.

Because of the IOM prohibition against teachers becoming advocates or suppliers of information for refugees, teachers who were presented with requests for help from students were placed in a difficult situation. They had to choose between helping students with problems that caused a great deal of stress or following the dictates of the organization. It is extremely difficult for refugees to get any information regarding resettlement; they are left in an information vacuum by the Canadian Embassy. This uncertainty is psychologically draining. As Linda Hitchcox so aptly observes, "The administration of refugee affairs is not often thought to be the concern of refugees."[153]

The stress felt by these refugees and the lack of a legitimate channel[154] for addressing these problems convinced some teachers to try to help refugees in spite of the dictates of the organization. This situation provides an example of the nature of resistance. Resistance will fill a void where a legitimate means of meeting needs does not exist or does not work. If the legitimate channel that exists is either ineffective or is not put into process, refugees will either try to find a worker who is willing to help them or they will take matters into their own hands. The presence of resistance is a symptom of the dissonance between clients and agencies in their goals and needs. The following chart illustrates the various options for responding to the needs of refugees.

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[153] Hitchcox, p 237, 1989.

[154] The one legitimate means of addressing these problems was insufficient. One student trainee was placed in the camp to follow up all requests from refugees for help with their cases. This person had a potential clientele of several thousand refugees.

Options for Responses to Refugee Needs

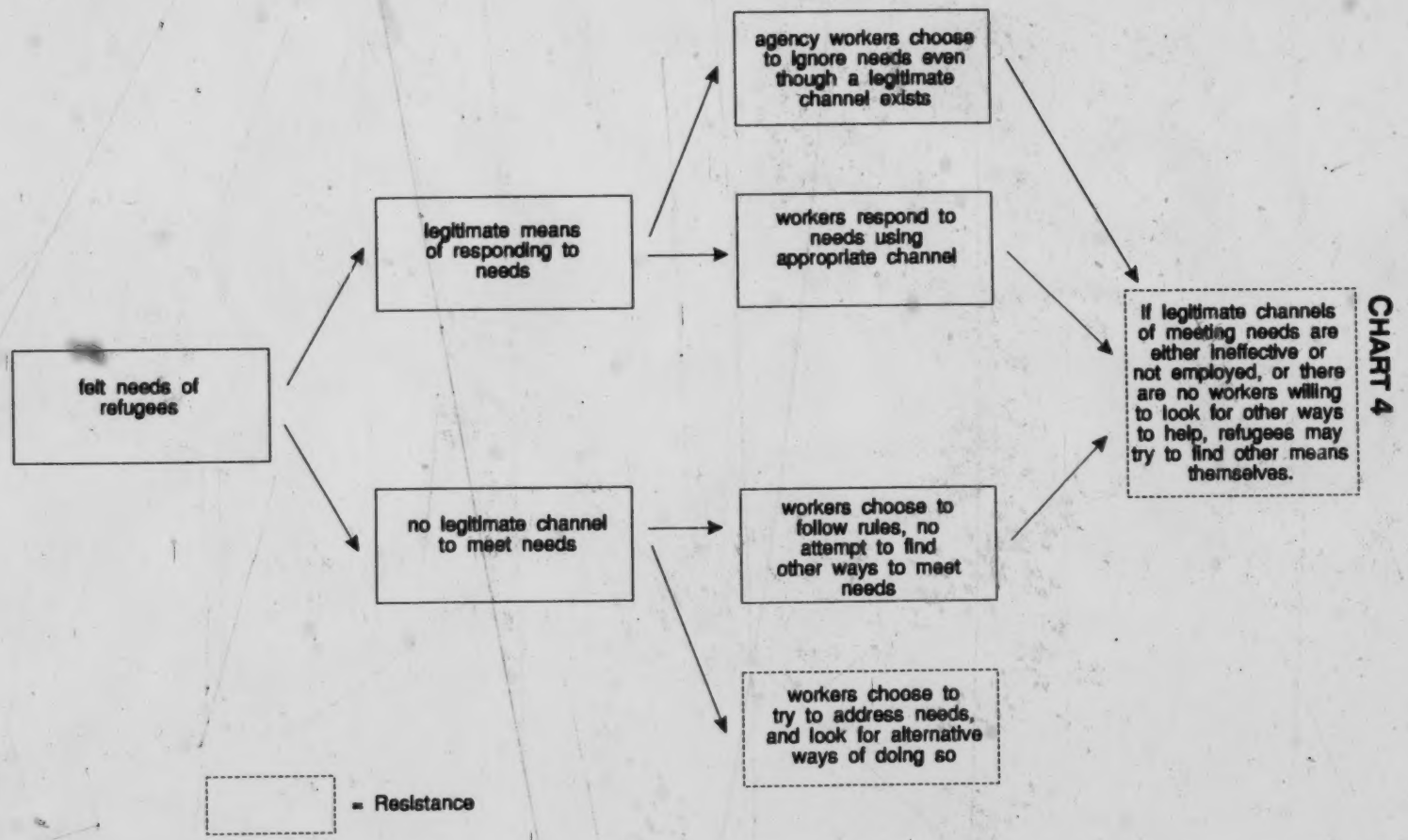
felt needs of refugees
legitimate means of responding to needs
no legitimate channel to meet needs
agency workers choose to ignore needs even though a legitimate channel exists
workers respond to needs using appropriate channel
workers choose to follow rules, no attempt to find other ways to meet needs
workers choose to try to address needs, and look for alternative ways of doing so
If legitimate channels of meeting needs are either ineffective or not employed, or there are no workers willing to look for other ways to help, refugees may try to find other means themselves.
= Resistance

CHART 4

Examples of all of these options were evident in Phanat Nikhom. There were some legitimate means of responding to problems refugees were experiencing with their resettlement case. However, these were either overloaded or the organization chose not to aid refugees for political reasons (UNHCR fieldworker). An example of this was the riot that took place in the Vietnamese section of Phanat Nikhom in March 1990. The UNHCR did not provide a means for addressing the needs of this group. A legitimate channel of helping refugees did not exist within the IOM Canada School, so some teachers chose to try to help refugees in other ways. Two of these workers had their camp passes revoked for reasons related to this.

Lack of experience with resettlement and the resettlement country also affected the teachers' ability to meet program goals or to create their own goals. Most teachers had no experience in helping refugees to resettle and some were not familiar with Canada. Out of sixteen teachers in the Canada School, six were Canadian. However a lack of experience in these areas did not seriously affect the usefulness of the program. There are other factors in which I would place more importance: experience working in refugee camps, experience teaching ESL, experience cross-culturally, and the ability to empathize with students, to hear their story, listen to their concerns, affirm their culture, and build self-confidence.

3. Settlement Worker Goals

The second group of workers that were interviewed for this research were settlement workers with agencies in Edmonton. Since the settlement agencies have now hired Khmer settlement workers, the question of disparity in goals between refugees and agencies becomes a more complicated one. I suspect that, depending on the type of question being answered, the Khmer workers would respond sometimes as refugees and sometimes as settlement workers.

Some differences in goals might have existed between these workers and other refugees interviewed, since settlement workers tended to be better educated than the average Khmer refugee. Former educational level is a factor that, with a larger random sample, might have revealed a disparity in resettlement goals within the Khmer community. By and large the refugees that had higher goals and higher possibilities for careers in Canada came from educated families. Their own education was disrupted by the Pol Pot regime, but they seemed more able to take advantage of educational and work opportunities both in the camps and in Canada. Heang Siek spoke of how in the camps he would accost any foreigner passing by and engage them in conversation to practice his English. The settlement workers all admitted that most refugees will not likely share their goals since the majority are rural people with little education.

Certain resettlement goals were emphasized more by the settlement workers. Among these were:

-obtaining information as to all the options for study
-becoming independent
-participating in the wider society.

These goals can be related to the stages of acculturation that are listed in the section on theoretical concepts. The first goal refers to the use of programs that are geared towards newcomers. These specialized programs help newcomers to adjust in the initial period in Canada. Independence in the second stage of acculturation is marked by the newcomer's ability to make use of mainstream services without the help of a settlement worker. The ability to participate in the wider community signals the third stage. This would include the capacity to participate in the economic, social, political, and cultural realms, though John Chan points out the necessity for the wider community to invite the participation of newcomers in society.

The Khmer refugees would agree with these goals if asked, but few people mentioned these ideas independently. The Khmer people were still more survival-oriented, while the settlement workers had been in Canada for a longer period of time. It was such a huge accomplishment to simply obtain a job, that these other goals were still in the future.

It is also possible that some Khmer people will never share these goals. Though most people want to be independent of sponsors, they may feel quite comfortable receiving social assistance. People who never attended school in Cambodia may not feel the need to do so in Canada, in a language with which they are struggling. Moly recognized that participating in Canadian society is not a priority for the average Khmer because the sphere in which they live has always been small.

4. Refugee Goals

The Khmer interviewed in this study had a high degree of homogeneity in their past experiences, and in the factors that will affect their goals for resettlement. They shared stories of personal suffering so severe as to be almost incomprehensible to me. They have all lost family members and have been in the camps for several years. Most of them were experiencing the initial stage of acculturation, and they had to cope with the challenges of this stage during an economic recession in Canada. Their goals are very much survival-oriented; it may take several years before they lose this focus on survival. All of these factors will combine to color the expectations and goals that refugees will have for their lives in Canada.

There was a surprising degree of consistency in the goals that they articulated, considering that the interview sample, though small, still contained a cross-section of people. These goals were modest and predictable. By the end of the first year in Canada the Khmer people want to continue to learn English and hope to secure a job that will provide some financial stability for their families. They expressed the desire to eventually learn some job skills that would allow them to move out of minimum-wage positions which require no skill and offer no advancement.

However, success was not measured only by the level of comfort attained by their families, but by the life chances that their children will have. The first generation of refugees hope to attain a certain level of comfort, but the most important goals and dreams are for their children. Many refugees expressed the view that while they might not be very successful in Canada, their children would have the opportunity to become well-educated and to develop a career.

At the same time, cultural maintenance is stressed as a priority. This was the case with all age groups, including a young woman who had left Cambodia at age five and spent most of her life in the camps. I would anticipate that there will be tension between the goals of success for their children and cultural maintenance. Success, if thought of in terms of career and education, will involve a certain degree of assimilation. There is almost always a trade-off in the form of sacrificing some cultural identity for acceptance and success in the wider community.

B. Analysis of Hypothesis

Hypothesis #1: Perception of Pre-departure Programs

Agency workers perceive the programs as more useful than the refugees.

There is a difference in perceptions between these two groups about the usefulness of the pre-departure program, but it is the reverse of what was hypothesized. This hypothesis was based on reports of interviews conducted with refugees enrolled in the American orientation program, which differs from Canadian programs in significant aspects. The American program is six months in length and is compulsory. The extended stay in camp and the compulsory nature of the program quite likely contributed to the negative feelings expressed by refugees towards this program. The policy of the Canadian government has been to conduct programs in the time that is required to process the resettlement file. As soon as this processing is complete, the refugee will leave for Canada regardless of what point in the pre-departure program has been completed.

These differences may be part of the reason why the results of my interviews with refugees and agency workers are in complete opposition to this hypothesis. The government officials[155] and non-Khmer agency workers felt that orientation programs in the camps were of limited usefulness. Their opinion was that refugees who are in a camp in Asia, and who have never visited a western country, cannot understand the western concepts that these programs attempt to introduce. There was also a concern that the pressures and worries in the refugee camp context did not make it a conducive learning environment.[156]

Conversely, all refugees, including settlement workers, agreed that the overseas programs were valuable, both for the information they provided and for the sense of purpose they impart in the camp setting. Refugees in the camps are hungry for any piece of information about their resettlement that is available. Since details about their case are often not available, their energies are focussed towards that information to which they have access.

The refugees that were interviewed in Edmonton could remember many topics that had been introduced in camp programs. Some of the information they remembered in detail, for example, how to ring a buzzer to get into an apartment building. Lois Willetts stressed that these are adult learners, and their ability to understand unfamiliar concepts should not be underestimated.

This is not to suggest that all information taught was of equal usefulness. The curriculum guide used in the WUSC program contains much detail that is irrelevant (eg: how to participate in Canadian elections, telephone area code map). I would speculate that refugees have both a subconscious and a conscious filter at work through which this information passes. They remember what they understand as well as what seems relevant to them.

This points to a another type of gap in the perception of programs. Agencies should be careful with the assumptions that are made about what they provide and what refugees actually understand. Knudsen further supports this caution: "Control over the program and what is taught does not lie solely with its administrators. Program goals are interpreted by teachers, and what is accepted and understood is controlled by the refugees themselves."[157]

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155 With the exception of Lois Willetts, Federal Immigration Department, Edmonton.

156 "It is often difficult to counsel refugees at the selection stage because of the time required to determine eligibility and admissibility. In addition, on first encounter, the refugee's state of mind may make him unreceptive to counselling." Immigration Manual, section 3:12.

157 Knudsen, 1988, p 240.

Consequently refugees and workers can have quite different perceptions of both programs and their effects. This perceptual gap is rooted in the difference in the two parties' experiences and culture.

Hypothesis #2: Model of acculturation:

While agency programs will tend to encourage assimilation into the mainstream of Canadian society, refugees will tend to consider cultural maintenance as a priority.

In the Camps

It is no surprise that both refugees and agencies espoused a model of integration. It is difficult to argue against a model in which the arriving culture and the host culture co-exist and positively influence each other. Although it is useful to listen to the rhetoric of the various actors on this issue, it is also necessary to observe the actual practices. The challenge is to try to control one's opinions and judgements as an observer so as to try to see what is there rather than what one assumes one will find. Having identified the necessity of making such an observation, I must admit that the complexity of this task is greater than what I was able to accomplish in this study. I can only offer some initial observations.

The claim has been made- and in some reports in strong language- that orientation programs have assimilationist tendencies in practice. Freire has suggested that there is no such thing as a neutral educational process.[158] If this is correct then the content of cultural orientation programs will have a bias in terms of what is presented and what is left out. An example of this would be the simulation of the workplace in American orientation programs which, according to Tollefson, stresses the worker's responsibilities and the employer's rights. Orientation programs can try to give people the tools that will help them control their futures, or point them in a specific direction.

Pragmatically, one may wonder to what extent these perceived biases actually affect refugees and teachers. It is a challenging task to try to provide skills and information that will facilitate adaptation to western culture, while still affirming the refugees' culture. The focus of the ESL and cultural orientation classes is usually directed at providing skills and information that are survival-oriented. This is the safe middle ground in which most of these well-meaning teachers operate: they are neither assimilationist nor are they attempting to empower the refugees through their presentation.

Most programs have recognized the need for affirmation of the refugees' culture and have included within their curriculum discussion questions that encourage cultural comparisons. Thus the curriculum could be used to support

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158 Freire, 1973, intro.

assimilation or integration, depending on the interpretation of the individual teachers. As was mentioned, this presentation will be further interpreted by the refugees, who will discard anything with which they do not agree.

Orientation should provide a bridge between the refugees' culture and western culture in a way that affirms and encourages the co-existence of both. MCC teachers recognized that programs should begin from the life experiences of the refugees, not from the exclusive perspective of the western mindset. They would begin lessons with questions such as, "What is your experience in Vietnam? How would you solve this problem in Cambodia?" This focus on affirming the importance of the refugees' culture was not the same priority in the IOM program.

In Canada

The atmosphere in which the settlement agencies in Canada operate is considerably less politically sensitive than the camp atmosphere, where one needs to consider the relationship with the host government and military and international organizations such as the UNHCR. These settlement agencies have had a history of being a voice of advocacy for refugees in Canada. Settlement workers are usually more in touch than government workers with the issues and needs of the refugee communities. Consequently, they would have better communication and a better relationship with the refugees. This is especially true since settlement workers are often former refugees themselves.

These agencies are able to articulate very clearly the differences between integration and assimilation and themselves support a model of integration. Their goal is to prepare newcomers to interact with and learn about the wider society, while still maintaining their own culture. Although Canada's multicultural policy promotes equality and sharing between cultures, often the message communicated on a day-to-day basis by the host society is assimilationist: "You have an equal opportunity to become like us" rather than giving newcomers an equal chance to develop their own communities. Settlement agencies and government policies cannot legislate the reactions of Canadian society.

When the policies and the attitudes of society are experienced by the newcomer as assimilationist, and the society fails to invite participation, newcomers are likely to withdraw into their own groups. In order to preserve their cultures they become isolated. There is within the Khmer community the need to protect and nourish a very fragile cultural tradition, which was brutally suppressed during the Khmer Rouge regime. Hopefully our national identity is strong enough to provide a space for this small balkanized community to lick its wounds, become stronger, and reform its cultural identity. They need to discover what it means to be Khmer in Canada.

Settlement workers and government officials observe that the Khmer community has on the whole remained fairly isolated and has had more difficulty in adapting to life in Canada than other refugee groups. There are many reasons for this. The atrocities experienced during the Khmer Rouge regime, and long term camp stays are not conducive to mental health. As Well, because most of the Khmer refugees are rural people, they face an even wider cultural gap between themselves and the host society. As Chin Lung points out: "Most of these people would have a hard time getting used to life in Phnom Penh, let alone Canada!"

Therefore this hypothesis was correct in stating that the Khmer community holds integration as a priority in the long term, possibly as more of a goal for their children. However a time of separation from the mainstream may be necessary in order for the first generation to establish its identity in the Canadian setting. The second part of the hypothesis was not supportable. Overseas agencies do not consciously encourage assimilation, and settlement agencies actively work towards integration. Nevertheless the emphasis of any program will largely be determined by frontline agency workers and the extent to which this message is accepted or rejected lies with the individual refugee.

Hypothesis #3: Employment Expectations

Agencies will stress the advisability of immediate employment and will discourage the use of social assistance; refugees will prefer to continue language and job skill training in order to prepare themselves for better jobs.

Expectations about what life would be like in the resettlement country emerged as one of the major themes of the research. When asked to indicate the central purpose of pre-departure programs, the answer most often given by non-Khmer agency workers was: "To lower the refugees' expectations" in terms of job opportunities (how long it will take to find a job, transferability of skills) and the length of time it will take to be able to buy cars and houses. A Vietnamese settlement worker in Edmonton commented that many refugees assume that once they arrive in Canada their struggles will be over, and they can relax. This concern is summed up in the following comment by a settlement worker in New Zealand:

> There is the need for the refugees to possess appropriately high expectations, since inappropriately high expectations seem likely to generate disillusionment and depression. These expectations need to be adjusted in the camps before people arrive. The gap between expectations and reality may affect their ability to resettle. Refugees often feel the pressure of not having

'made it', and not being able to send more money back to camp.[159]

The Khmer settlement workers agreed that refugees must have an accurate understanding of the challenges they will face, however they voiced strong concerns related to this issue. The first concern is that in lowering expectations of life in the resettlement country, these programs have concomitantly lowered the refugees' opinion of their own abilities. In speaking of difficulties that may be faced, every effort should be made to ensure that refugees are not overly discouraged or convinced that they will not be able to overcome the challenges. After spending many years in the camps refugees often lose their self-confidence and self-esteem. One of the greatest needs they have is to be encouraged that they are still capable of learning, and can gain some control over their future.

The second concern is that refugees should be made aware of all the options available to them for further education and job skill training. The priority of government employment counsellors has been to help refugees become employed so that they will cease using government assistance as soon as possible.[160] When refugees prefer to continue their education this becomes an area where refugees and employment counsellors have conflicting interests. One Cambodian refugee who had become quite discouraged commented, "Now we know why they let us come to Canada- because the government wanted cheap labour."

The suggestion was made in the presentation of the research problem that refugees are being tracked into the bottom rung of the labour market as a consequence of lowering expectations and the failure to communicate all the educational options available to them. To suggest that the intention of orientation programs was to track refugees into these jobs would be alarmist. However, this can be the result when too much stress is placed on the necessity of immediate employment at minimum wage and there are insufficient opportunities for them to explore other options.

There is a real tension between preparing refugees for the reality of what kind of jobs they can expect in the Canadian job market and not specifically tracking them into lower level jobs. The line between these two is crossed when employment counsellors do not make refugees aware of programs that are available to them as landed immigrants, thereby limiting the refugees' choices.

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159 New Zealand and Indochinese Refugees, 1988, p 213.

160 "Many refugees have a tendency to regard themselves as helpless victims, an attitude detrimental to successful resettlement. officers should...impress upon refugees the desirability of achieving full economic independence as soon as possible." Immigration Manual, section 3:12.

C. Relationship of Refugee and Agency

The significance of the client-agency relationship is a subject that has been explored with more attention in the past few years. This topic became especially significant during the time that I spent in the refugee camp, since relationships of power and dependency are such a potent reality of life in this setting. This issue is also central to the research question. There is less likely to be a large gap in perceptions and goals when an egalitarian relationship exists between refugees and agency workers. An egalitarian relationship infers an attempt to share power and information, and to understand and value the other group. The camp setting is not conducive to reciprocal relationships of this nature, so agencies that express this as a goal must be intentional in their pursuit. Power and knowledge are key themes within these relationships.

The dispensing of information has become a tool of power and control in the camps. Agencies have control over language classes and cultural information and embassies have control over information relating to resettlement. Most agencies, and certainly the Embassy, are loathe to rescind or share this control since refugees are more manageable without knowledge and power. Within this kind of relationship helpers can become controllers.

It was MCC's policy to try to attain information for individuals about their case, and also to provide refugees with any general information about Canada's selection criteria or settlement policies. However teachers in the IOM program were discouraged from trying to gain information for their students. If the teachers were somehow able to access information, such as the date of departure, they were not allowed to tell the students. Departure dates were withheld from refugees until five days to two weeks before leaving. This gives the Embassy a great deal of room to maneuver and make changes without the need to inform refugees.

Control over their lives and the ability to make decisions is taken away from the refugees. Self-sufficiency and independence- the qualities which would enhance the refugee's ability to resettle- are not valued as a resource to be developed. Bruno Bettelheim describes decision-making as a function which, like some nerves or muscles, will atrophy if it is not used.[161]

Decision-making and control are key elements in the maintenance of a positive self-concept. When these are taken away by agencies, the agencies themselves can reinforce learned helplessness and dependency. Agencies often perceive refugees as unable to look after themselves or make proper decisions, as I

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[161] In Hitchcox, p295, 1989.

experienced during a meeting in the camp where a rehabilitation program was presented to the teachers in the IOM Canada School.

The purpose of this meeting was to make teachers aware of rehabilitation programs that were available for refugees, so that we could refer refugees to this program. This sounds like a fine humanitarian resource, but there were two problems. First, these referrals could be made without the refugee's knowledge or permission. The fact that these are adults whose permission should be necessary before taking action on their behalf simply did not occur to the other teachers. I raised the issue of first receiving the person's consent; the response of the workshop leader was, "It would be nice." It is not 'nice', it is essential.

The second issue has greater consequences. Embassies may request reports from this program about individuals being helped. Identification of a medical problem has the potential of making a refugee medically inadmissible for resettlement. Because of this consequence, refugees may want to choose not to avail themselves of these services unless a guarantee of privacy could be secured. Within the referral process, this choice does not exist.

Within my sphere of influence in the camp, I responded to the need to empower refugees by drawing up a list of questions that they could take with them to Canada to ask CEC counsellors. These questions are meant to help them to access information about programs- information that they may not receive without specifically requesting it.

FIGURE 8
QUESTIONS TO ASK CANADA EMPLOYMENT CENTRE COUNSELLORS

May I take ESL classes? For how many weeks?

Full-time or part-time?

Who will pay for the classes?

How long is the waiting list?

Is there a student living allowance?

Are there other ESL programs?

How can I get a high school diploma?

What vocational programs are available?

What occupations will be needing workers in the future?

How can I attend university as a mature student?

<u>Programs and Services to ask about</u>

-Settlement services: orientation, ESL, employment counselling

-English in the Workplace

-Skill upgrading for certification

-Multicultural organizations, clubs

Although refugees have considerably greater access to information and control over their lives once they reach Canada, as newcomers they can still be very vulnerable. If they do not know what programs are available to them, they will simply accept without question whatever the employment counsellor tells them. Some refugees told stories of being exploited by employers because of their lack of knowledge of labour laws. Within the structure of Canada's sponsorship system it is always the sponsor who decides on the provision of ESL (unless the refugee somehow has his own money); the refugee may or may not be involved in the decision-making.[162]

Nevertheless, even the act of trying to empower another lacks mutuality. Those who seek to help can fall into the paternalistic attitude of dispensing knowledge to the needy; knowledge is bestowed as a gift by those who consider themselves knowledgeable. Paulo Freire teaches that humanization occurs when each person is conscious of and takes control of the knowledge that empowers him to direct his future.

In truth, refugees bring a wealth of survival skills and incredible resilience to the challenge they face. Berube points out that most Westerners could never have survived what the refugees have and so should avoid condescension.

A Jesuit priest who has been working on the Thai-Khmer border since 1980 sees the relationship of refugee and 'helper' from another perspective. He recognizes that these refugees have suffered terribly from a lack of respect which has stripped them of their human dignity. His advice for people who wish to understand refugees is this:

> If you wish to speak to the refugees, emphasize their greatness and their dignity, not their suffering. If you wish to help them, do so with respect...they have an enormous amount to give- far more than we can offer them. They give us extraordinary examples of courage, dignity, decency, and beauty.[163]

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[162] Rogge and Neuwirth in Chantavanich, p 267, 1988.

[163] Pierre Ceyrac in Refugees magazine, UNHCR Geneva, November 1990.

VIII. CONCLUSION

During the first part of this research— the time spent interviewing people in Edmonton and the previous summer in Oxford and Geneva— my interest was primarily in the content of the cultural orientation programs. Although I recognized that this was not the most important factor affecting refugee resettlement it was one which could be altered. Therefore, questions about the content and perceived benefit of these programs were central to the interviews.

Since the portion of the research conducted in Thailand came so late in the research process, it was meant to provide a context in which to better understand the focus of the research— the assessment of the interviews in Edmonton. However, the portion of the research which should only have provided a context became in some ways pivotal.

The nature of my questions changed due to developments which took place in the refugee camp just before my arrival. The catalyst to the changes in the camp atmosphere was a violent three day riot during which some refugees had been killed. Questions about the content of cultural orientation programs seemed inconsequential in comparison with the issues that arise out of camp life.

The collection of data regarding programs no longer holds the same significance when several refugees are dead and the only organization with the mandate to protect refugees seems unable to do so. Further investigation revealed a mixture of facts and rumors which are equally disturbing. The screening procedure to determine refugee status is administered by the Thai military. The claim is made that refugee status is not based on a person's experience of being persecuted and fleeing, but is something that can be bought with a price or withheld for political reasons. Subsistence food rations on the border have been cut to below subsistence level, yet Pol Pot still lives in luxury a few miles from the camp where I work.

In the final analysis, then, my research question became a political one. I began by asking questions about perceptions of programs and ended by asking questions about relationships of power, resistance, control of knowledge, and the implications of political decisions in the region. Some general questions and observations that have arisen from this research are noted here, followed by a list of recommendations, and further research questions.

There is a need for voluntary organizations to look at the larger picture of displaced persons in this region in the context of current political decisions and efforts and to base their policies and programs on current realities rather than the political scene that existed when these programs were first initiated. Berube warns that these organizations can be coopted into serving the political agenda of nations

with vested interests in the region. They can also fall into the trap of serving the agency's agenda if they become too concerned with continuing their funding and programs, and fail to ask whether their presence is in fact helpful to the people that they purport to serve. Concern for funding has worked to silence many organizations from publicly criticizing the policies of funders (UNHCR, UNBRO, American government) and concern to remain in Thailand has silenced them from criticizing Thai policy.

The role that the UNHCR has played in Indochina has also come under growing criticism from many NGO's. Although it must be recognized that its presence in the region has been an important influence and it has had to operate in an extremely sensitive atmosphere in Thailand, the charge has been made by several NGO's that UNHCR has exchanged its role as advocate and protector of refugees for permission to remain in Thailand. I would question whether the presence of the UNHCR in some cases serves to legitimize human rights abuses, since its presence can be interpreted as being a stamp of approval on the activities that are being observed, unless a protest is filed.

A UN Peace Plan for Cambodia is in the process of being negotiated as part of the durable solution to refugee movements in this region. The effectiveness of this plan will be negligible unless there is recognition of the role that other nations have played in destabilizing the region through overt and covert intervention. The likelihood of stability in the region would increase dramatically if economic relations were established with the governments of Cambodia and Vietnam. This would help to ameliorate the hopeless economic situations which cause people to flee.

The current economic and political situation in Cambodia is almost hopeless. If drastic changes do not occur in the United Nations Peace Plan that is now being drawn up, the Khmer Rouge will regain power, there will be another holocaust and another massive movement of Khmer people. Yet in the midst of real danger one cannot forget the admonition of a Jesuit priest- that the hope for Cambodia lies largely in the incredible resilience and the survival spirit of the Khmer people, the gentleness, tenacity, and beauty of the Khmer culture.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made, based on information gathered during this research:

-Settlement agencies and agencies overseas should hire former refugees to be in positions of planning and policy formation since these people are in a position to understand both the experience of refugees and the resettlement country. Decision-making needs to be transferred to the hands of refugees. Refugees should also be represented amongst the ranks of immigration officials.

-The program coordinator for Canadian overseas orientation programs should be given the official mandate to act as an information conduit between refugees in the camps and the Canadian Embassy. There must be a person to whom refugees are able to go with concerns and questions about their cases, and from whom they can receive accurate and current information.

-Because a lack of knowledge and control over their lives can be a major stressor, refugees should be given their destination and the date of their flight as soon as possible.

-Evaluations of the overseas programs should be conducted by an outside person.

-ESL should continue to be provided in the camps and in Canada; cultural orientation should be provided through translators, and the topics should be coordinated with English lessons.

-The focus of the ESL and cultural orientation should be practical by relating to the immediate needs of refugees, which revolve around daily survival topics. Irrelevant and detailed information (learning the national anthem, filling out complicated forms) should be eliminated from the curriculum since it causes unnecessary confusion. Refugees need to be provided with both the basic information, as well as the tools with which to access information once in Canada.

-Cultural orientation teachers should be Canadian, and should be familiar with settlement procedures and services in Canada. These teachers should have current information specific to each province. Each refugee should be given an orientation handbook specific to the province to which they will go, outlining services and how institutions function in that province. The books should be written in English and a refugee language.

-Training should be provided for people who are in direct contact with refugees (CEC, CIC, Settlement workers, group sponsors) so that they are better able to understand newcomers.

-One barrier to better jobs for refugees is the lack of transferability of skills and qualifications from their home countries, which is a waste of human resources. There needs to be a mechanism by which skills and qualifications can be evaluated and the necessity for further training could be assessed.

-Government policies and programs should be based on a model of multiculturalism which views the cultural background of the newcomer as a valuable resource to the Canadian mosaic rather than a problem needing to be fixed.

-In recognition of the mutual nature of the acculturation process, CEIC should work in cooperation with the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism to develop programs which would help native born Canadians to understand and appreciate the cultures of newcomers.

During the courses of this study I have discovered some research questions which could be explored further. The theme of relationships between the various actors and the structures within which they function is one such question. A study of the relationship of refugees with agencies, refugees with government, and agencies with government would be illuminating. Related to this is the gap between an agency's official goals and the personal agenda of the fieldworkers also needs to be explored. Also of interest would be a study of the relationship between the structure of an organization, its source of funding, program goals, and the relationship with clients. A final question that was touched upon in the *Presentation of the Research Problem* is the gap between what is taught in resettlement programs and a)what refugees actually understand, b)what they choose to accept or discard.

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APPENDICES

FIGURE 9
QUESTIONS FOR REFUGEES

1. How long were you in the camps in Thailand?

2. When did you arrive in Edmonton?

3. What did you know about Canada before coming here? From what sources was your information?

4. What kind of orientation/ESL/job skills did you receive in the various refugee camp before coming to Canada?
Khao I Dang:

Phanat Nikhom:

5. Do you remember anything from this orientation that was helpful to you when you first came to Canada?

6. Did you have any orientation or ESL when you first came to Canada?

7. If you were able to go back to the camps to prepare people to come to Canada, what would you be sure to tell them? What should they be taught?

8. What was the biggest problem you faced when you first came to Canada?

9. What goals/hopes do you have for your new life in Canada?

FIGURE 10
QUESTIONS FOR AGENCIES/SETTLEMENT WORKERS

-What are the specific goals of the program?
-Were these goals informed by refugee input?

-Have there been formal/informal evaluations of the program?

-What is your perception of the special needs/characteristics of the Khmer community as they resettle?

-How would you define 'successful resettlement'?

-What kind of relationship do refugees have with the government? With settlement agencies?

FIGURE 11
QUESTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

-What services are available to refugees? (settlement agencies, ESL, job training, continue education...)
Gov't sponsored:
Private sponsored:

-Have there been formal/informal evaluations of settlement programs?

-Does CEIC have specific goals/policies for resettlement?

What is your perception of the special needs/characteristics of the Khmer community as they resettle?

-How would you define 'successful resettlement'?

-What kind of relationship do refugees have with the government? With settlement agencies?

TABLE 5
TOTAL NUMBER OF KHMER AND INDOCHINESE (KHMER, VIETNAMESE, LOWLAND AND HIGHLAND LAO) IN ALBERTA AND CANADA FROM 1980 TO 1990

	Alberta	Canada
Khmer	2,385	17,994
Indochinese	15,411	100,949

Source: CEIC Immigration Statistics, 1991.

TABLE 6
TOTAL NUMBER OF MEN COMPARED TO WOMEN STUDYING ENGLISH AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS AT PHANAT NIKHOM REGUFEE CAMP AS OF APRIL, 1991

Level*	Number of Men	Number of Women	% of Men to Women
1	150	280	34
2	166	117	59
3	186	120	61
4	115	42	73
5	112	76	60
6	86	31	74
7	42	14	75
8	25	2	93
Total	882	682	56

* Levels taught range from Level 1, which corresponds to literacy level students up to Level 8, which corresponds to upper intermediate level students.

WHY DID I LEAVE VIETNAM?
LETTER FROM A VIETNAMESE ASYLUM SEEKER

Phanat Nikhom Thailand, March 1991

Why did we escape?

That's the first question, whenever I came into an interview by delegations from third countries they always ask so, uncountable times! People from free countries ask me why I escaped from Vietnam. If we had freedom in Vietnam I'm sure we would not be so foolish as to risk our lives to try to leave- 500,000 people have died in Thai waters since 1975! How can I persuade westerners that I am not an economic refugee!

Life in Vietnam

After the war ended, life under the communists was miserable. We didn't die of starvation because Vietnam is furtile, we had enough food to sustain life. The problem was not material but spiritual. We couldn't stand the principles and discipline of the communists. It's terrifying when they are illiterate but they have power in their hands. The communists are very rich because they seized the plants, factories, businesses, taxes, trade... whoever wants to run a business must bribe them. They live in luxury while the people live in poverty! They undermine the economy, confiscate our assets, while using propaganda to deceive the world.

My family was detained twice. If they detect any sign of rebellion they will crush it right away. They will put in jail whoever says something 'reactionary'. No wonder in 15 years we haven't seen even a small demonstration- everything looks o.k. except for all the refugees! The government dominates the people with a sophistocated machine. Conversations are monitored, constant night inspections, we must get permission to leave the city. Only students from communist families can go to university, even though they are as stupid as their illiterate fathers. We can never develop our talent or skills.

Escape

We work like mad dogs from morning till evening- for what? First, to make a living, to be able to bribe, and to *escape*! Each attempt costs $1500, and you'll find yourself in prison many times. Please do not think the escape is 'easy sailing'! Escape, prison, bribe, escape, prison, bribe, sharks, pirates, storms, over-crowded refugee camps, and death!! Nothing can dissuade us from escaping- even death. In 15 years I tried to escape 10 times! Dear friends, do you really think we would risk our lives just to be able to buy cars and houses? Are we really 'only economic refugees'? If I had the choice I would do the same thing again, because even death is better than the miserable life under the communists.

I was stunned when I arrived in Thailand. I will never forget the horrible 'welcome' given to us by the Thai soldiers for three years. Sometimes I cried bitterly in my heart. After such a horrific journey and the overcrowded camps I'm amazed that people don't go insane.

Why do I want to go to Canada?

Canada is famous for its peaceful life and its land of immigrants, where people from different ethnic groups can live peacefully and develop well. Where there is freedom, that's my country! The racial conflict there is small because Canadian society is based on the dignity of humans. I do hope my adoptive country will have a lot of warm hearts! If I can't succeed in Canada, I'm probably too stupid to deserve another chance.

What help do I need from Canadians?

I hope that Canadians won't make me feel inferior or tainted. They might find my culture quite different, but please understand that every culture is valuable. I love western society and I'll adjust to it but I will keep oriental morality to guide my life. I hope you will let me fit into Canadian society!

I am writing these words to implore you to support and raise the quota for Vietnamese refugees into Canada. I wish you would sympathize and accept my extreme gratitude and deepest thanks.

DESRIPTION OF THE RIOT IN PHANAT NIKHOM REFUGEE CAMP

The following is a report of the events surrounding the riot from the perspective of a Vietnamese refugee.[164] This account differs in significant details from the official report of the Thai military. I have included my own observations as a teacher in the camp.

At 1:00 a.m. the night of March 3rd Thai soldiers came into the camp to take the Vietnamese refugees to Sikhiu camp. The Vietnamese chased the soldiers out of the camp, broke down parts of the fences, and broke into the camp jail to release the prisoners. The camp commander came to talk with them at 8:00 a.m. on the 4th, and again at 7:30 that night. The refugees refused to let him speak and he was forced to leave. At this point events became violent, as the Thai military and some refugees used weapons. There are reports of refugees wounded and killed.

The Vietnamese leaders handed a list of 10 requests to the Thai military at 7:00 a.m. on Tuesday the 5th. They waited in front of the gate until 5:00 that evening, when the Thai military agreed to bring 385 people back to Phanat Nikhom from Sikhiu. Then on Wed. the 6th further fighting occurred within the Vietnamese community. The refugees who had tried to develop good relationships with (read: 'bribe') the Thai soldiers in order to be screened in, were beaten up. It is unlikely that any refugees were brought back to Phanat Nikhom from Sikhiu, since no further screening was to be carried out in Phanat Nikhom.

Wednesdays were 'moving days' in Phanat Nikhom, and each Wednesday the foreign workers coming in to camp would see three or four buses waiting to take refugees away— sometimes to Don Muang airport in Bangkok, and sometimes to Sikhiu camp. As we were approaching the camp on my last Wednesday there (April 24th), we saw three huge trucks overloaded with the red and white striped Chinese bags that refugees use to carry their belongings. Around the corner in the Transit section of the camp, there were about eight buses and hundreds of people waiting to be transported to Sikhiu. It seems that the Thai military were moving the Vietnamese out of Phanat Nikhom as quickly as possible to avoid further riots, though the problem may simply be transported to Sikhiu.[165]

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[164] This summary is from a letter written by a Vietnamese refugee who was resettled a few days after the riot ended, used with permission, his name is withheld by request.

[165] In fact this has happened; During May 1991 there were violent riots in Sikhiu and violent deaths occurred.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH KHMER LEADER

Feb 7, 1991

Laurel: Tell me first about your background- when did you leave Cambodia, which camp did you go to...

Heang: I left in Oct. 1979 and ended up in a camp on the border called 007. My purpose in leaving Cambodia was to get to a resettlement country to continue my education. The rumors said that if one could get to the refugee camp and was under 18, they would be accepted by Britain, Canada, Australia, France, or particularly by the USA. I was about 19, but I thought that if I told them I was 17, they would accept me as an unaccompanied minor, and be accepted for resettlement where I would be able to pursue my goal. So I came to the camp on a bicycle, I didn't speak very much English, but I communicated to some people, I went to see a UN officer. As I was talking to him trying to find out about the opportunities to be resettled, I was completely disappointed. He said there was an opportunity to be resettled, but I would have to go to Khao I Dang and wait for my case to be processed. I would have to stay there and couldn't leave Thailand. I thought that it was automatic, I did not know that there was a process I had to go through before being processed. So that was quite disappointing to me. A lot of people told me it might not be feasible to enter Thailand because I heard stories about mistreatment of Khmer refugees by Thai authorities in the camps. Such rumors have some basis in truth, but also just rumor. I wasn't sure what to do, so I went back to Cambodia in Oct 79.

I was listening to some American broadcasting in Khmer through a Hong Kong station, and I realized the situation in Cambodia would not be getting any better. I was afraid that the door to Thailand could be closed one day soon, so I decided to attempt another trip in Jan 1980. I came to the same camp with the intention of going on to Khao I Dang the day that I arrived was the last day that they were allowing Cambodians to go to Khao I Dang, but I missed the last bus. Anyone after that would be considered an illegal alien coming to Thailand. I stayed in that camp for one month. It was right between the two fighting armies and there was A lot of shelling. So I thought that the best thing for me to do was to believe in the Cambodian saying that in order to live you have to be willing to die. I risked my life by coming to the refugee camp so I decided to continue, to go to Khao I Dang and sneak in illegally at night. We hired a guide to take a group of 20.

I stayed in Khao I Dang until Sept 1980, when I was moved to Kap Chun holding centre, where I stayed until the end of 1981. At the beginning of 1982 I was moved to Phanat Nikhom holding centre, where I was supposed to be met by the French authorities to be sent to France. I did not want to go to

France because by 1982 it was a socialist government, and to Cambodians we don't distinguish between socialism and communism, to us they walk hand in hand because the Pol Pot regime used the words interchangeably. I know what it is like to live under a communist regime. To me socialism is communism in a diplomatic language [he belaboured this point at length]

L: but you are in Canada now so somehow you made it here rather than France...

I decided that it is better to go to France than to stay in the refugee camp where the future looks very uncertain. In 1982 I was accepted to go to France, but the official told us 'we can't take you right away because of economic problems in France.' At that time I was working at three places, I was teaching English at the Australian language school..

L: so at some point you have learned to speak English.

H: That's right, I missed that point. Most of my time spent learning English was self-teaching. In the refugee camp there were some [Khmer] English teachers, but their level of English was not high enough to be my teacher. In Khao I Dang there was no English school taught by foreigners, same in Kap Chun. In PN there were many English teacher because people are being interviewed for resettlement, so permission has been given for these foreigners to come and teach English to prepare these people for their new countries. So they teach Chinese, English, French, Japanese in PN.
But in Kap Chun I had to rely on myself. I devoted 2 years to studying English. It is not impossible to teach yourself if you develop a systematic approach, by making observations from books, not from speaking because you do not have that opportunity. My study would go much faster if I only had one English speaking person to ask questions when I try to test my theories. So I study from my books [brought with him from Cambodia] and I use the bible. In PN I worked for the Seventh Day Adventist church, and they gave me an English bible, and a Cambodian bible. Learning from a Cambodian bible and an English bible provided an excellent comparison. I went through the bible from Genesis to revelation twice in two years time. It acts as a source to which I can always go to test my theories. [he goes on at length about English grammar rules]

L: You're obviously a very motivated person

H: Oh yah, very very motivated, even right now I still don't know when this desire is going to go, and that's why I come up with one proverb for myself, my philosophy is this: "you only say it is impossible when you die.

L: How did you come by this, what is your background in Cambodia, were you from an urban centre?

H: Yes, I was born in Phnom Penh

L: And so you were educated?

H: Not very much, I was born in 1961, and in 1975 I was 14 years old in grade 10, that's all the education I received in Cambodia. When the Khmer Rouge came in there was no education in Cambodia, and there was no opportunity to learn until I left Cambodia in 1980. I brought a couple of books from Cambodia. My guide told me to throw them away. My bag was full of books. I was determined not to throw it away, I said either I die with it or they come with me, because without those books I would not be able to study English. In Khao I Dang and Kap Chun I spent my time learning English and I took this opportunity- as soon as I see a 'white' (that's what we call you guys- a foreigner) I know they must speak English, so I would go out and strike a conversation. At this time I would not allow my 'victim' to speak very much, because I wasn't interested in pronunciation, I wanted to test my theories. I figured that if I could write very well, even if I could not speak, I can write out what I want to say.

L: Can I just interrupt you for a minute, I'm wondering what kind of timeline we are working with, when do you need to leave? I want to get to some different questions, I don't want to run out of time....[we have till about 12:20- another 25 minutes] did you receive any kind of cultural orientation in the camps before you came to Canada, was there any preparation?

H: Not very much

L: what year was it?

H: that was 1982

L: So there really was not much organized in 1982?

H: yah, not very much.

L: Yah, I've heard that from other people. So what did you know about Canada before you came, anything?

H: Most of the information that I know about Canada is that it is the second largest country in the world, very big, and it's very cold. That's all I know; I know too that in Canada French is spoken in the province of Quebec, it's a free country, I think that's it.

L: So you didn't receive letters from friends or relatives in Canada?

H: No, I don't have anyone in Canada.

L: When you came to Canada did you come to Edmonton?

H: No I came to Montreal.

L: What were the biggest problems that you had in your first three months?

H: O.K., my problem can be different from other people; [sure] As I said my goal is to pursue education, my problem is to try to find out by myself how I could go back to school. I talked to my counsellor, and I am not impressed. All he can tell me is 'go to work!'

L: This is a CEC [Canada Employment Centre] counsellor?

H: Right. Had I believed him, that I would not make it, I would be a common labourer right now [Heang is a pharmacist] He told me that you are here to work.

L: Get a job as soon as possible...

H: Right, not to go to school.

L: So at that point did the Canadian government not give you ESL classes as soon as you arrived?

H: Well, you see, ESL classes there is for French; they realize that I speak English very well already so there is no need for me to learn French. They said in Montreal you can communicate very well just by speaking English, there's no need for you to go to learn French.

L: Well, that's a change!

H: So I was not given the opportunity to go to school at all.

L: Just go to work.

H: Right, 'you speak very good English, there's no need for you to go to ESL', so I did not learn anything.

L: Did you go to work right away?

H: I was looking for a job, it took me about three weeks to find and job, and I went to work.

L: Was it a low-level kind of job?

H: Yah, minimum wage, physical labour. I don't feel very good, because I realize that my dream is not coming true. I did not know what to write back home because my parents have a very high expectation of me. They don't expect me to come to this country and work as a common labourer. They spent so much money trying to educate me in Cambodia, and that was there dream- having one of there children get as much education as possible, but they cannot help me anymore because I am in Canada now, and they lost all their wealth because of the Khmer Rouge.

L: How long did you stay with this job?

H: I stayed in Montreal until December, then I came to Canadian Union College in Lacombe.

L: How on earth did you get from Montreal to Lacombe?!

H: This has to be very carefully planned. In PN Holding centre I worked for the Seventh Day Adventist church. The minister and the pastor were very impressed, and would like to sponsor me to go to this college to become a minister, so that I would be able to go back to Cambodia and preach the good news of Jesus Christ.

L: That was their agenda, was that your idea as well?

H: No, that was their idea, I didn't know. I met a dentist in the camp who was from Lethbridge. He was a volunteer in PN, and I translated for him. When he left for Canada I lost touch with him. He wrote to the camp saying that he would like to sponsor a refugee to go to the Canadian Union College [Seventh Day Adventist college] They chose me.

L: Were you a Christian?

H: They thought that I was, I told them that I do not disbelieve in Jesus, but that I do not truly believe in him either, because I have my own philosophy of life as well. But before this plan went through I was accepted by the government of Quebec. So the dentist told the missionaries that when I get to Canada if I was interested in going to school I should give him a call, which I did when I was in Montreal. So I went to Canadian Union College.

L: What did they teach you there?

H: I didn't meet the entrance requirement, so I was classified as a special student. My first semester I took ESL, one religious course, and public speaking, and typing, and psychology. After that semester was finished I was talking to my typing teacher. I was the best typist in the class. She asked me what my goal was, and I told her I wanted to become a secretary.

L: What was your goal at that time?

H: To continue my education and get higher in society. But I thought that I could never go back to school, so I asked her if I needed matriculation to be a secretary, because I thought that I would not be able to challenge the matriculation program in this country, because I'm too old, I did not have the background for it. So I wanted to go into a skill that doesn't require matriculation. She told me that in this country they only hire women to be secretaries. I thought that was the only thing I could do, I don't want to go back as a common labourer.
She said 'yes, you can make the matriculation!' She's the one who convinced the registrar to put me in the matriculation program. She said she believed in me and that I would make it, just give him a chance. So I started the program. Her contract ran out and she left. I haven't met her since then. I made it. I won two awards- for the highest scholastic achievement in chemistry for the freshman year, and the highest score in mathematics at the college.

L: Now I want to ask you a question which is the basis of my hypothesis, and you've mentioned something that confirms what I'm thinking. My hypothesis revolves around the goals that refugees have for their own resettlement, and the goals that agencies or government have for refugees. My hypothesis is based on reading about American programs, but it sounds like it applies here. MY guess is that settlement agencies have one goal for refugees, but refugees have a very different set of goals for themselves.

H: That's right

L: and I suspect that the agencies are not aware of the difference; [that's right] they assume that refugees have the same goals, but refugees have different goals. I wonder if you could comment on that.

H: No, we have different goals. You see, for people who come to this country young, below 18, they would not suffer the consequences of this assumption, because they would have to go to school anyway. They have no other choice. In my case I was not give that opportunity. I was not told when I was in Montreal what the various opportunities for going back to school were. I did not know that such opportunities exist.

L: Do you think the same thing would happen today, has there been a change from 1982 to 1991?

H: There might be some change but I'm not sure to what extent, because I'm not sure what the counsellors told the newcomers.

L: I'm wondering as well if there's a difference in the attitude of the government and the attitude of the settlement agencies? Do you think if you were counselled by a settlement agency things would have been different?

H: In that situation it would open my eyes better as to what opportunities I can pursue, for example, if every refugee who comes to this country assumes that he has to work as a common labourer, in that situation the government deprives people of the contribution that they could make to the Canadian society, if they were given the opportunity to carry on with their education. Now the fact that a person has been away from school for so long does not mean that that person cannot go back to school. I thought that 80% before, but now I am convinced that this is wrong because I proved it.

L: now what about the Cambodian refugees that you are working with here? What about people who are illiterate in their own language, and they come from the countryside, is it a different situation for them?

H: It's probably a different situation.

L: Because I have heard this argument by some people working in resettlement, that we really have to lower the expectations of the refugees in the camps, to prepare them for a job that they will be eligible for. There's no point to them

coming to Canada assuming 'I'll have a car, and I can get any job I want, and my skills are transferrable', because it's not true.

H: I do not think that comment is necessarily right and good at all. It is true to let the refugee know the real situation in this country, but by no means lower their expectation. Tell them the truth- 'your skill may not be transferrable, but you can go back to school to make that skill recognized.' But to tell them 'your skill is not transferrable, go and clean' that's not right.

L: The vocational programs that are offered in the camps basically prepare people to be sewing machine operators, janitors, low level skills. So I wonder if by the way that we organized our orientation program, are we channeling people into low level jobs?

H: Yes, a possibility. Why not set up some academic courses and see if some people... for example when I was in the refugee camp I was 19 years old. If I'm going to say in the camp for three years, I'll be 22 when I get to Canada. That does not mean I should be a janitor for the rest of my life. The question you must ask is, do you consider the refugee to have an equal status as the people in this country? Why do you have a continuing education program for people in this country? Why don't you have just what we have in the refugee camp? Why do you teach chemistry and math at AVC (Alberta Vocational Centre)? How do you know that a refugee can't continue to learn when they are 22, 23? They have not been given the opportunity. They may say they cannot, but who knows? They may do very well if given the opportunity. I was not given the opportunity in the camp, and I would have attended any class.
But you are right, what they are thinking is that when these people come to Canada they will work in a factory, so why don't we set up a program that trains them to do that. It may be true for the majority of the people, but there might be some other people who make up 20-30%, who may want to do something else!

L: Another question I have is how much it is possible to get refugee input into the programs in refugee camps [none] What I'm assuming is that as a white Canadian I don't understand the experience that these people have been through, but I want to know what the refugees' goals are. Before they come to Canada, how can they know enough about life in Canada to be able to participate in setting up the goals for the program? Is this possible at all?

H: I think you have a good point. A lot of the refugees coming to Canada have not been told very much about that. Unless you tell them a little bit more about

the opportunities that are possible, they won't be able to meet that opportunity.

L: So we really need to rely on the advice and input of refugees in Canada to help. It seems like a bit of a roadblock because I think that the programs need to be formed on refugee input, but it's difficult to get that input from refugees who haven't had the resettlement experience. If you ask them what do you want to learn, they'd say, 'I don't know'.

H: that's true, It's much better to ask the refugees who have gone through all of these experiences, we know what we did not do in the camp which could help. We have been in Canada for awhile, we have been through the system, we realize what we should have done in the camp to help speed up our adjustment, our integration into this society. Now people in the camp would not know.

L: And also Canadians would not know because we have not been through this experience; so my last question is, based on your experience, what should I teach in the camps?

H: First of all, obviously teaching the English language is the most important thing. The refugee must be able to learn the language of the country where they are going. Secondly, an orientation course must be set up to let the refugees know the various opportunities that exist in Canada. Do not portray to them that in Canada you can only become a common labourer; that's not the case.

L: So they need to have as many options as possible given to them, then they choose what they want.

H: Yes, not detailed information, but enough to know who they can contact to help them with their goals.

L: I think this kind of information gives them a certain amount of independence from government and from settlement workers. If they know what is available, they have more control, they know what questions to ask.

H: So if the counsellor does not mention other choices they can say, 'when I was in the camp I was told I could go back to school. I'm not saying I don't want to work, Mr. Counsellor, I'm going to work now to support myself, but I also want to know about the opportunity of going back to school to improve myself. I don't want to do this job for the rest of my life! And I was told clearly in the camp that because this is a country where opportunity exists, I do have a right to go back to school!'

But if they aren't told they will assume that everything that the counsellor says, they have to do.

L: I have another question related to this; you are a very highly motivated person, you're not the average Cambodian that is in the camp now. 95% of them are from the countryside, they are illiterate, and from the comments they have given to me, they have said that when you are in the camp your goals are very basic, my first goal is to have enough food to eat, and to get out of this camp. And I think that these refugees in PN are not thinking about aiming very high, they just want to get to Canada and learn the basics. So I wonder if the refugees are going to be interested in hearing about these opportunities when all they really want to know is how do I get money to buy food, and get a place to live? How do we combine the need for these two elements- survival skills and higher goals.

H: Because the majority of the refugees are coming from the rural area, and are not highly motivated, you are going to have some problems combining such things, even convincing them they are able to learn, but it depends on the group of refugees. There may be a few to whom this applies, and they should not be deprived of the opportunity because the majority are not interested. It's the same way in Canada when you try to motivate school kids to study. If 80% of the students are not motivated does that mean that we are not going to present motivating material? Shouldn't we try to motivate them as well as offer something to the other 20%. The refugees need to be encouraged to make goals beyond the camps.

If you ask them if they want a higher standard of living (nice house, car, good job etc) they would say 'yes' but they are scared to say that in the camp because Cambodians would think that they don't want to state that goal publicly because if they don't reach that goal they will be embarrassed in front of all who have been told. So publicly they won't express high goals. They are afraid of people laughing at them, thinking them above themselves.

L: I have been asking that question to all the refugees that I interview, about their goals for their future in Canada, and I have been surprised that many of them seem to aim very low, they say 'I just want to be able to support my family, I just want to be a janitor, any job is fine'. I have been assuming that just because they are from the countryside they feel that that is all they are capable of, but I wonder if this trait is coming into play, that they are afraid to express their real goals to me.

H: Exactly. When they say I will do anything that might not be what they mean, if given a choice of being better, they wouldn't choose that. People with no

education don't talk highly of themselves. They have very low self-esteem, they believe this gives them less responsibility for their lives. The question is, why do people have low self-esteem? It's influenced by his background and the environment. They need constant encouragement. These people have friends who say to them 'why do you worry about going to school? There are so many Canadians who have not made it, who work as janitors, who are on welfare. Who do you think you are??'

The majority of Cambodians are not making it, they are not highly motivated, does that mean their motivation cannot be raised up? If you ask them what they want to do they will always take an easy out- 'I want to go on social services'; You get more from social services in Canada than you would get from working twice as hard in Cambodia. So you tend to feel satisfied,

L: especially when your friends in the community are doing the same thing.

H: Then you have another group of people who are highly motivated and want to work their way up. Everyone has a different motivation, but everyone needs to be given the opportunity.

L: What I have found is that it seems as if social workers are more likely than employment counsellors to give refugees the funding for further study- either English or job skills. [maybe so].

I have an idea that you could help me with. I am going to PN to teach, and I wonder if you could help me to make up this kind of information sheet listing various opportunities that are available to refugees in every city, translated into Khmer, so that they know what to ask for.

H: Sure, why not, we could do it in this class so these people know what's available too.

EPILOGUE

Cambodia- How Do We End the Story?

AND THEY ALL WENT RIDING...
with their crutches and artificial legs
through the minefields
through the killing fields
through the fields with no rice

INTO THE CAMBODIAN SUNSET...
("When my country burns, why does no one put it out?")
one of those hot Asian sunsets that silhouettes the boy
on the back of the water buffalo.

If you listen nostalgically to the land you can almost hear the drone of planes flying over with another load of bombs.
But you can't hear the Khmer Rouge.
They slip in deathlike silence through the jungles;
after they come you can't even hear yourself think.

AND THEY ALL LIVED...
'minefields, killing fields, no rice, bombs'
The children with very good artificial limbs could use this
as a skipping rhyme.

AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY...
only in the ever-after.

Tell me, if Hitler were found to be alive, (living in a mansion in Rio de Janeiro or Chonburi)
and if a superpower were to make a modest investment in arming his merry band of Neo-Nazis,
(and now, brought to you by the sponsors of the Tian An Men Square- that's Gate of Heavenly Peace- Massacre...)
would the United Nations feed the army?
Would they ask Himler to take Germany's seat in the General Assembly?
Would the Americans build hospitals for the ones wounded for killing the innocents?
And what I really want to know is,
would the Allied Forces invite him to return power,
because he is undoubtedly a changed man?